



PULPIT UTTERANCES.

JOHN ALBERT WILSON.



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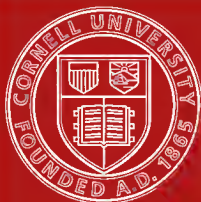
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John Albert Wilson

PULPIT UTTERANCES

FROM

LIPS ON WHICH THE ETERNAL SILENCE HAS FALLEN

A MEMORIAL OF

JOHN ALBERT WILSON

AUTHOR OF "SONG-CAPTIVES," "THE PARADOX, AND OTHER POEMS," ETC.

BOSTON

GEO. H. ELLIS, 141 FRANKLIN STREET

1884

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P R E F A C E.

IN accordance with the wishes of friends and parishioners, this volume, as a memorial of the work of a sincere and earnest seeker after truth, is given to the public.

Doubtless some favorite sermon will be missed from among the number,—an unavoidable difficulty in making a selection from many discourses, nearly all of which were worthy of publication.

The sermons are arranged in the order in which they were delivered before the Unitarian Society at Bridgewater, Mass., the first on Jan. 15, 1882, and the last on Dec. 2, 1883.

If the thoughts here collected but serve to help and to ennoble the lives into which they

enter, and thus continue the influence for good of one who "being dead yet speaketh," the object of the volume will have been accomplished.

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In Memoriam

JOHN ALBERT WILSON,

WHO PASSED BEHIND THE VEIL HIDING ETERNITY FROM TIME,
SATURDAY, DEC. 8, 1883.

"THERE sat the Shadow feared of man ;

"Who broke our fair companionship,
And spread his mantle dark and cold,
And wrapt thee formless in the fold,
And dull'd the murmur on thy lip,

"And bore thee where I could not see
Nor follow, though I walk in haste,
And think that somewhere in the waste
The Shadow sits and waits for me."

MEMOIR.

GONE! These lost ones,—how hard to fill the vacuum which their departure leaves in our hearts and lives! How these sad experiences come to us, like a cold, black, ruthless hand out of the gloom, snatching from us our life jewels! But not to us alone these trials, for it is no strange thing that has happened.

“Who has not lost a friend?”

When the royal Indian Prince, in the humble guise of a wisdom seeker, told the bereaved young mother that herbs, brought from a house where none had died, would cure her already lifeless child, he showed how complete was his sympathy with the sorrowing one, brought so rudely to face the inevitable destiny, and his wisdom in so gently teaching her the universal fact.

Our friend has left us! Some three decades or so ago, he entered within the walls of this curious tenement we call life, developed into fuller and still fuller life, encountered trials and obstacles, under the clouds and sunshine of the varied experiences

of our checkered being, faced the problems of existence, soared oft on the pinions of thought into the rarer ether which fills the boundless, in eager search of the unknown, and as oft returned to Earth's mother bosom, like the rest of us, still longing, still unsatisfied. The questionings after the secrets of the beyond, which perhaps have form, to some extent, in all minds, were in him intense, sometimes rousing to a white heat of fervid inquiry. "Paradox" and "Solitude," among his published poems, give some idea of these spirit strivings, the former being written almost entirely among the tombs of a city cemetery. A strong dash of melancholy, pervading his nature, made such sombre musings frequently most congenial to him.

Yet, though somewhat prone by temperament and mental bias to pensive reflection or solemn thought when alone, in society he was usually markedly cheerful, and even jocular. If there was, on the other hand, work of any kind to be done, to which he was bound by duty or inclination, he applied himself to it with such unflagging zeal and devotion as frequently to make him unpopular with those who had not his ability or inclination for continuous and unremitting labor. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," was essentially the motto of his life. A comparatively brief life it was,

as measured by the years, but certainly long as estimated by work done, labor accomplished, in extent only known to the few.

Yes, our friend has departed; and thought in retrospect traces him, the earth traveller, back to the beginning of his pilgrimage, shares again his boyish life, and again through memory's glass sees the home group of which we both were members. As the opening bud foretells the bloom of the flower and the ripened fruit of maturity's season, so the developing life of childhood holds the promise of the coming years, the prophecy of the deeds that are to be.

But who cares to dwell on promise when the fulfilment is here? Who longer speaks of the warning streaks of day, flung athwart eastern skies, when the bright sun himself shines higher and higher, mounting to his zenith, even though, while still gazing, a dark cloud receives him into its bosom, and leaves the observer enshrouded in gloom?

As the companion of his boyhood and the sharer of the trials and triumphs of his disciplinary years, before manhood, with its revelations and responsibilities, dawned upon him; as associated, though less intimately, with his early maturity, few knew him better than the writer. He whom we mourn, and whose voice still speaks out in the strong

utterances of this volume, had a singularly diversified experience and an uncommon range of special preparation to fit him for his work. His riper youth and early manhood passed in practical business life. Then followed college and professional training, succeeded by a period of clerical and varied literary labor, all combining to fit him for the work in which head, heart, and hand could unite in strong consent and choice.

Earnest, zealous, ambitious, and with a capacity for labor and sustained effort which was amazing for one of his slender physique, into whatever he undertook, all the forces of his nature were thrown, and became a unit to propel and drive forward to the desired consummation. Opposition was not depressing, but stimulating, in that it served to bring out all his resources of latent power. Yet this very nervous energy, which was so lavishly used to overcome antagonism and remove hindrances, really exhausted the life force and sapped the vitality of a frame whose strength lay rather in the will power and the nerve centres than in the physical structure generally. It was the oft-repeated story of the ardent, tireless spirit fretting and wearing out its material tenement. Mortgages were continually being given on the physical estate to meet the pressing emergency, and furnish ready funds to the

exacting proprietor ; and foreclosure was necessarily only a matter of time. Again and again, the writer warned that physical bankruptcy must inevitably result from such reckless waste of the vital powers ; but all such warnings were unheeded or forgotten. He thought that his mental and physical endurance was practically inexhaustible.

Too much anxiety to present nothing but finished work, coupled with a certain tendency to internal fret and worry,—which latter, perhaps, was inseparable from his temperament,—was continually disturbing that nice balance which should exist between the physical and intellectual, the material and the immaterial. Enough vital force was not produced to permit such lavish expenditure of mental and spiritual energy, and at the same time carry on the bodily functions properly. Surely, the premature demise of one so promising ought to ring a warning in the ears of all those who are apt to forget that the body is the foundation and condition of earth life, and that on its vigor and efficiency everything else depends.

To the mingling of Anglo-Saxon and Celtic blood in his veins, our friend and brother probably owed that marked union of the imaginative and poetic with the strong practical business capacity which was a predominant feature in his character. Not

that the latter faculty was always brought into play in his actions; for he often allowed this capability to lapse into abeyance, and gave the former free rein, and abandoned himself to their rule.

The main deficiency in his character was a want of caution, permitting him to say and do on impulse what was inexpedient and rash, thereby incurring vexation and penalty which a more calculating disposition would have avoided. Absolutely fearless and willing to risk consequences, he often recklessly invited attack, and threw down the gauntlet to Danger. To this must be ascribed many, if not most, of the mental trials he encountered, and which, it is to be feared, hastened his dissolution.

As a strong, clear prose writer, a poet of no mean ability, a speaker of more than average power, and a conscientious, earnest man, he has, I think, commanded, during his pulpit career, at least the respect of his readers, hearers, and acquaintances, whether they fully indorsed his individual views or not. In his social relations, he was generally urbane and sympathetic; and, if at times somewhat positive, it arose, we believe, rather from the sincerity of his convictions, than from any desire to be aggressive or dogmatic.

Abhorring despotism and tyranny in any form, he naturally inclined to the side of the weak, sometimes

with a chivalrous self-forgetfulness that to some appeared almost Quixotic. He had a deeply religious nature, for which he failed to find any nourishment or satisfaction in the empty forms and ceremonies, creeds, dogmas, groundless assumptions, and unwarrantable teachings of the so-called Orthodox Church, in which he had been reared. But this volume testifies for itself on such points; and through it he, "being dead, yet speaketh."

Open-handed and generous, faithful in his friendships, warm and sincere in his affections, those who knew him best will not soon forget him, or feel quite reconciled to that dark shadow from the Death Angel's wing which hid him from their sight. But it is some palliation of the dread stroke that he passed from the seen to the unseen, surrounded by friends and faithfully tended to the last by the one he loved best on earth. All that kindness, sympathy, affection, could do to avert the calamity — so feared by us, not by him — was done; and the thought of this must be our consolation now. Further, we could not; for the issues of life and death are not in mortal hands.

Our friend's material form rests on the hillside of the quiet cemetery, and the spring flowers will blossom about it, and fill the air with fragrance and beauty; and the summer birds will sing in joyous

concert, and make the trees and shrubs which surround his resting-place vocal with melody; and autumn will shed her leaves as a tender tribute, and cover his grave, spangling it with colors of varied patterns, fresh from Nature's own treasure-house. The wintry winds, too, will chant a requiem above him. So the seasons will each give dowry and such offering as they have to one who loved them in their varied beauty, and rejoiced in the successive changes of the fourfold year. The earth form will be enwrapped by Nature in her loving arms, until such time as the material elements shall be fitted to re-enter the great circle of being, to reappear in new life of grass or leaf, bud or flower, —a beautiful resurrection of the body.

And for the risen spirit, which has even now entered on a new existence and engaged in other fields of labor, it doubtless realizes, in a very full and exalted sense, that which it so desired to know here. Yes: that intense curiosity to pierce the cloud and lift the veil is now gratified, and in the thought of that blessed "peace" which has come to the restless soul, that content which has at length reached the hungering spirit, that light which has illumined the darkness in which all earth's children must grope,—who can refuse to say, Amen! Rest, brother, friend, minister! Rest in the larger life

and greater opportunity and untrammelled freedom !
Rest until, in the fast-coming future, we, too, by
growth of wing, gain strength to rise above earth
and its disquietudes, and soar aloft and afar to join
thee in the *somewhere beyond* !

“But thou and I have shaken hands,
Till growing winters lay me low;
My paths are in the fields I know,
And thine in undiscovered lands.”

H. R. W.

PULPIT UTTERANCES.

SELF-HELP IN RELIGION.

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure.”—*Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians* ii., 12, 13.

It is related of Mahomet that, camping one evening after a weary march across the desert, one of his tired followers said,—

“I will leave my camel loose, and commit it to God.”

“Friend,” answered Mahomet, “tie your camel, and commit it to God.”

You will say that this injunction was but the application of ordinary prudence to one of the daily affairs of life. And yet do not we, at times, in the spirit of this camel-driver, seek to saddle upon the Almighty cares which in common sense we are bound to take upon ourselves? Are we not inclined to close our eyes to that divine law of labor indelibly stamped upon the face of Nature, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread”? And are there not among us even those who seat themselves by

the empty flour-barrel, and wait, with Elijah, for the coming of the ravens?

Alas! the day of miracles is past. The cows of Philistia, which in olden time went lowing from their calves to carry back the ark, would to-day undoubtedly respond to the maternal instinct, and stay at home. The mountain ram would struggle hard for freedom, ere he yielded himself a sacrifice, even to save Isaac from the knife. The ravens are so busy caring for their little ones that Elijah's needs are neglected. That "God helps those who help themselves" is the crystallized result of human experience; and the proverb might quite as truthfully be rendered, "God helps those *only* who help themselves."

Then whence springs this philosophy of inaction, this idle dependence on supernatural aid? We may, I think, trace it to the superstitions of our ancestors, many generations removed. It is but the confused hum of their distant voices, echoing and reverberating up the long corridors of time.

Thus, the savage of to-day—and from such we are ascended—believes that his idol of wood or stone insures to him success in hunting, victory in battle, or drives the game away or brings defeat, blesses him with health or curses him with disease. Therefore, he seeks, by flattery or threats, to cajole or terrify it to his service. And do not fragments of this old-time chrysalis still encumber the wings of our larger development?

In an English manufacturing town, not many

years ago, an epidemic broke out, and people died by hundreds. The mills were closed. The town was draped in mourning. Upon the door of nearly every house appeared the sad insignia of loss. The death-carts thronged the streets. The doctors were baffled, and all agreed that this must be a chastisement sent from God as a rebuke for sin. They who were able repaired daily to the churches, and there besieged the throne of grace with passionate appeals for mercy.

As winter approached, the plague was stayed, only to break out with increased virulence upon the opening of spring. And thus on for three long years in succession, in spite of homilies and discourses, in spite of prayers and prostrations, until it seemed as though the Father had forgotten or cared not for the sufferings of his children, and the rebellious cried out, with the wife of Job: "*Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die!*"

At last, a man of science came, who, setting aside all theories of divine wrath, applied himself to discover a natural cause for the phenomenon. His attention was directed to a large pool of stagnant water at one side of the town; and inquiry revealed the fact that this basin had formerly been dry, but now served as a sink for the reception of garbage. He had this thoroughly drained and cleansed, then filled up the depression with rocks and earth. No sooner was this accomplished than the plague ceased, and returned no more. The town was saved, and renewed its wonted prosperity.

Will any one contend for a moment that these people suffered through special visitation of God? I think not. Their suffering was clearly the result of their own act, in the infraction of those laws which the Divine Ruler has decreed for our government. Nor do I believe that the prayers of all Christendom would have changed the result. The people had spent *three years in prayer*, when *one week of action* was all that was necessary.

Nor is this an exceptional case. Each one here could supplement it with a dozen—equally apt—from his own observation or experience.

Arguing then from these facts to the general principle, we shall find that nine-tenths of human misery arises from infraction of *law*, and that relief must be sought by conforming our lives to the divine will, not by seeking to warp the divine will to the false pattern of our lives.

Does this view do away with the necessity of prayer? It does not. It makes that duty the more imperative. The divine will being manifested in fixed laws which control our lives, it behooves us to acquaint ourselves intimately with the nature of those laws; and this we shall best accomplish by striving to bring our spirits into communion with that of the Divine Law-giver. Therefore, at this point, the question arises, *What is prayer?*

In answering this question, the mind naturally reverts to that most beautiful prayer commended by Jesus to his disciples, and in daily use among us,—a prayer in which the divine fatherhood of God

was so eloquently recognized and affirmed. This shall be our example of what *the spirit* of prayer should be.

And, next, we ask, What is the object of prayer? And what was Jesus' probable object in formulating the Lord's prayer?

No one will question that he had an object; and this must certainly have been one of two,—either to direct God or to instruct and benefit man. It could not have been the first: therefore, it must have been the second.

Turning now to this prayer, we find that its second petition reads: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Now, bearing in mind the conclusion at which we have already arrived,—that his object was to instruct and benefit man,—what did Jesus mean by these words,— "Thy will be done"?

To my mind, he meant much more than the negative sense of submission and resignation to the divine will, in which they are usually interpreted. Did he not rather mean—his teaching being addressed *to man*—that the divine will is to be sought out by man, and, being found, is *by man to be done*? In this sense I believe he meant the words, and in this sense I use them.

Hence, we learn that prayer is not only communion with God and exaltation of soul to the Divine: it is also action. It is, first, the seeking after, and, second, the doing of the Father's will. Every experiment of the inventor is a prayer for further revelation of the divine will. Every furrow turned

by the ploughman is a petition to heaven for bread. Every blow upon the anvil is an aspiration to God.

Does this view tend to weaken our faith in the overruling providence of God? It does not: it intensifies this.

Suppose that Drachenfels Castle stood so high above the Rhine valley that from its summit the whole course of that mighty river—from its source to its outlet—should at a glance be revealed. Now let one seat himself upon the parapet, and, looking afar off to the south-east, amid snow-clad Alpine peaks, detect a little spring just bubbling from the ground. Now it overflows; and a tiny brooklet, like a thread of silver, leaps laughing down the mountain side.

Fed by the melting snows and swollen by sister streams, it gains in volume and in force. Now it enters Lake Constance, and, emerging thence, leaps the Rhine, falls and sweeps onward in majestic grandeur, calm but irresistible, past republics and empires and kingdoms and states, until it meets and mingles with the great ocean beyond.

Adown the stream float many ships, great and small, freighted with differing cargoes, and bound on diverse missions. The mariner steers from headland to headland only, and knows nothing beyond the little limit of his daily horizon. But, to that watcher on the height, the journey is known in its entirety; for he sees the whole course.

And may we not thus picture the Divine Ruler,—raised above and commanding the whole course of

time? We are the mariners on that mighty river, steering from headland to headland, and performing our daily tasks within the little circle of our daily horizon.

We are sore perplexed at times by adverse winds, we are cruelly bruised by rude waves which buffet us; yet we have faith that, to his watchful eye, the source and the outlet, the start and the goal, the sum of pleasure and the aggregate of pain, are all alike revealed.

"For it is God which worketh in you."

Oh, what a thought is here! Every aspiration to the Divine, every endeavor toward higher things, every duty performed, is the impulse of the God within. Even as the clouds, ascending from the ocean, drift far inland and spend themselves in rain and snow upon distant mountain peaks, yet rest not until they return to the sea, so the divine impulse in our *souls*, though congealed by worldliness and wasted on sin, yearns ever for the Infinite Source whence it came. Like the prodigal, though we wander in far countries and feed our souls with husks, yet are we assured that our Father hath bread enough and to spare; and, guided by the lamp of his love, we struggle onward and upward toward our home.

What a grand example of true self-help—self-help founded in a sublime trust on God—was the life of Jesus!

"Ah," you say, "but *he* had a genius for religion and for good works."

True: he had,—perhaps, the greatest ever possessed by man. And what is genius?

It is a drop of dew, at morning enclosed in the tiny chalice of a flower, at noon permeating all space. It is a breath, drawn by an infant; expelled by a Cicero. It is a speck of ink upon a quill-point, which shall startle the world. It is the latent fire in a fagot that shall destroy the universe.

Yes: it is an engine of tremendous capabilities; but, without the applied motor of labor, it must ever remain barren of result. Like the unbent bow of absent Ulysses, idle genius speeds no arrow to the mark.

The mission of genius is to seize upon the trifling incidents of every-day life, to probe them for their hidden meanings, and by a few skilful touches to render them immortal. This was Jesus' task; and, when we consider how brief was the period of his ministry, and how limited the field of his labor, the results he accomplished are truly wonderful to contemplate.

As a poor carpenter, he toiled at his trade until middle life, then left the bench to become the acknowledged leader of the world's thought. With the axe of inspired genius, he hewed planks from the block of ever-existent Truth, and built therefrom a causeway binding earth to heaven. He has gone before, and countless millions follow after. If we also would attain that heavenly goal, we must walk in his steps, hearken to his teaching, and emulate his example.

But, alas! our cries of "Lord! Lord!" are so vehement and persistent that they drown the voice of the Master, and we lose the import of his message.

O my brothers, let us be silent, and hearken to his words: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom, but *he that doeth the will of my Father.*"

"*He that doeth the will.*" This is the doctrine of self-help, this is the grand law of human development. Rung by rung, we climb the ladder which lifts us to God.

Let us then seek to know the Father's will; and, finding that, let us as Jesus did work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, remembering alway that *it is God which worketh in us*. Whether, therefore, we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, let us do all to the glory of God, and walk "*as seeing Him who is invisible.*"

Father, we ask thy guidance throughout this our earthly pilgrimage and in our search for the hidden things of thy law. Teach us thy will, and grant us strength to perform the same; and make us day by day to grow to be more worthy to be called *thy children*. Amen.

INDIFFERENCE.

“To whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.”
— LUKE xii., 48.

MANY centuries ago, a king died in Thebes ; and, when the body was embalmed for burial, a few grains of wheat were placed between the folds of linen covering the right hand. We know not by whom, we know not why this was done. It may have been an idle superstition, it may have been a custom of wise significance. And so—doubtless, with many tears and lamentations—the dead king was laid away in the tomb of his ancestors, and the door was hermetically sealed.

Generation succeeded to generation, century to century, cycle to cycle. At last, the tomb was opened ; and in the withered hand of the dead king those seeds were found, the life-germ in each still perfect. They were planted, and bore fruit, which was in turn planted, and thus on, until the fields of a continent laughed beneath their burden of Egyptian gold ; and, to-day, the hungry of a world are fed by the bounty of that dead hand.

In like manner, many centuries ago, Jesus of Nazareth placed in the hand of a world spiritually dead the living germs of Divine Truth. Through the long dark ages, entombed in stolid ignorance,

they slumbered ; and, when at last they saw the light, their yield was but scanty and sadly choked with weeds. But, pregnant of vital force, year by year that yield has grown ; and, to-day, we, heirs of the ages, reap the harvest which was sown in tears and fertilized with blood.

But the pangs of that Mother-past, by which we have attained to spiritual manhood, are nothing to us now. We turn down the page of history, and close our ears to the cries of anguish echoing and reverberating up the long corridors of Time. The dark shadow of ignorance behind us serves as a fitting background to our nineteenth century enlightenment.

Though our ancestors cruelly persecuted their followers for conscience' sake, yet they have been kind to us, their descendants ; and we must not quarrel with their memory. The bluest of blue blood flows in our veins ; the wisdom of the ages is assorted in our heads ; the mantle of refinement droops gracefully from our shoulders. We are proud of all that we have, we are proud of all that we have not, and we are proud of our pride.

And to this intense self-complacence we have added a supreme indifference. Striplings of twenty ape the stoicism of men of the world at fifty, and enthusiasm upon any subject is regarded as the sign manual of vulgarity. And yet, admitting that enthusiasm is vulgar, is it not, nevertheless, at times a good thing. As Shakspeare puts it,—

“ Why should a man, whose blood is warm within,
Sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster ? ”

We are *blasé* and indifferent. Why? Certainly, not because we have fathomed the deeps of knowledge or scaled the heights of the Infinite. As well might one from the hotel roof in Geneva pretend to overlook the topmost peak of Mont Blanc. Were we not blinded by egotism, we should see that peak rises above peak in far distance, and that the final ascent is for a generation millions of years removed. Indifference is not the mark of profundity, but rather of superficiality. Small attainments and large conceits go hand in hand. The tyro is ever self-complacent, and the apprentice vaunts his three months' knowledge; but the master, through large experience, has learned modesty and silence. Show me a man of true culture, deep and broad, and I will show you a man simple and unaffected as a child. Thus, Sir Isaac Newton, at eighty, said that his life had been but that of a babe gathering shells on the shore, while the great ocean of Truth lay unexplored beyond.

The rosary, hung on Wisdom's hands,
With ready tongue Youth glibly tells;
But faltering Manhood slowly spells,
And Age, abashed, in silence stands.

The men and women who have moved the world were one and all enthusiasts. Take Buddha for example, who exchanged his royal purple for the yellow cere-cloth of a beggar, and preferred the vile contents of an alms-bowl to the dainties of a king's table,—all that he might learn the secret of salvation, and teach it to men.

Or Jesus, who, from his baptism in Jordan until his death on Calvary, ceased not to proclaim with ardor the coming of the kingdom, and earnestly to incite men to repentance.

Or Paul, who counted "all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ," and was even esteemed a madman for the gospel's sake.

The power of enthusiasm to impel men and move the world is unquestioned; but, alas! *we* have no desire to do either. Like the old man in the fable, all we ask is to be let alone.

The Unitarian Church claims to be—and unquestionably is—the church of progressive thought. Finding the ruts worn in an effete past too narrow for the chariot wheels of our larger development, we have left the beaten track still pursued by our contemporaries, and alike braving their censure and disregarding their prophecies of disaster, with Reason for our guide and science for our companion, we explore the universe.

But the Unitarian Church is also pre-eminently the church of aristocratic indifference. According to modern philosophy, hell being a myth and heaven open to all, there would seem to be no necessity for zeal. There being no fire to extinguish, why should we weary ourselves working the engine of salvation? There being no souls in danger, why should we hoist the ladders of escape? So, alas! we reason, and what is the result?

Of three hundred and fifty churches reported by the Association, more than one-fourth are without

pastors ; and, of these, a considerable proportion have no service whatever.

On the other hand, in the very places where we fail, the churches which pursue the beaten track of old-time thought are thronged by eager crowds. Let Moody and Sankey visit any city in the Union, and every seat will be filled, while their Unitarian competitors preach to empty pews. There must be a lesson underlying all this ; and, if we can attain to it, it may be of service to us.

You say that our faith, being founded in reason, appeals to the understanding only, hence only the cultured few respond ; that the old faiths, being founded in feeling, appeal to the masses, to whom feeling is all in all. I think this is a fair statement of the case. But what is the underlying principle of every form of worship ? You say it is religion. True, and what is religion ?

Religion has been defined as "the sense of the supernatural" ; and, accepting this definition as correct, we find that the religious principle is not partial in its distribution, but is inherent to the race, and manifests itself in all classes and conditions of men, even from the lowest to the highest in the scale,—from the fetich worship of an African to the broad spiritual conception of our own Emerson, if you will. Now, if we would find the seat of the religious principle, we must look for it in that which is common to all conditions of men. Feeling fulfils this requirement of universality, while thought does not. All feel, but all do not think. And, if this

proposition be disputed, you will at least admit that feeling is the only arbiter of thought,—a feeling of conviction. You think and reason over a question, and at last *feel* convinced.

Hence, we find that religion is founded in feeling, of which emotion is the outward expression.

Now, if we symbolize feeling by a grape-vine, though it may grovel upon the ground, and bring forth some fruit of indifferent quality, yet it needs the trellis, *thought*, to bring its fruit, *action*, to the highest perfection.

We find, therefore, that, while religion is rooted in feeling, it needs the support of reason to reach its highest development in right living. If we exclude reason, religion degenerates into superstition. If we exclude feeling, religion has no standing-ground, and worship ceases to be worship. True, it may retain the form of worship without the spirit, even as a corpse retains the form of humanity after the soul has fled. But the form, in such case, has become a mere scholastic exercise of the reasoning faculties. The church is turned into a school-house, and communion with God means only rhetorical display. We attend the play of "Hamlet," and find the part of Hamlet omitted.

This, I think, has been our mistake. In the pride of reason, we have excluded feeling from our service, hence religion has no longer a place therein. In extinguishing the conflagration, we have put out the hearth-fire. In subduing the fever, we have frozen the patient.

It is related in the church legends that a certain monk was favored with a vision of the Virgin ; and, as he sat gazing on the wondrous apparition, a beggar solicited alms at the door. But, lost in an ecstasy of devout adoration, the monk heeded him not. Whereupon, the vision sternly addressed him : "Leave me, and attend to thy brother's need, or I will leave thee to thine undoing."

Even thus, lost in adoration of a glorified "Christ," we forget the example of the man Jesus. We hear his words with reverence, but we heed them not. We cry aloud, "Lord! Lord!" but neglect to do the will.

It is time that we took a step backward. We have had enough and to spare of well-bred apathy, and the results have been disastrous, to an extreme. Let us now have a little of the old-time enthusiasm of our fathers, a little of their warmth and earnestness and zeal. This mode may not be so polished as our present habit ; but, without a doubt, it will be much more effective. In religion as in business, if we would accomplish anything, we must off with our coats, and put our shoulders to the wheel. If we do this, we need have no fear for the future ; and the man who hangs back shirks his duty. The critical period in the history of the Unitarian faith has been reached and passed, and the outlook to-day is brighter than ever before. It depends now upon Unitarians to make the Unitarian organization a power in the land.

We claim to have attained to a higher religious

conception than have others: then, it is our duty to raise them to the plane we occupy. "Ah!" you say; "but the missionary spirit has never prevailed in our organization." Then, it is time that it did; "for none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself." Every talent we possess is a sacred trust from God for the benefit of man; and "to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required."

We have had enough and to spare of slothful indifference. The sun is high in the heavens, and the harvest waits for us. We have had enough and to spare of pulling down: let us now begin to build up. We have had enough and to spare of denial, and the age of affirmation has come. Man is a fact; religion is a fact; the life of Jesus is a fact; and the all-pervading, all-enfolding Unity of God is the one supreme fact, within which this minor trinity rests secure. Here, then, is a firm foundation, on which we may establish a faith that shall win the allegiance of the world.

Did I say that hell is a myth? Alas! it is a fearful reality. Did I say that heaven is open to all? Alas! it is not. The hell of iniquity yawns for the unwary, and the gates of heaven are doubly locked and trebly barred by sin. Millions of our fellows are lost in the night of ignorance and steeped to the lips in vice. The moans of their misery bear witness against us before the throne of God; and yet we dare to affect indifference, and ask, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

I say unto thee, O man! O woman! I say unto

each individual soul within the sound of my voice, and I would that I had the voice of a Stentor, to reach the ear of every dweller upon this broad earth,—“According to the multitude of your gifts, so is your responsibility. You have received much, and ‘to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.’”

We have no right to be indifferent. We have no right to rest. Rest is for the dead. Action is the privilege of life. This life is a life of warfare. Ignorance, sin, and misery ravage the land. The trumpet sounds the charge; and shall we rest idly on couches of down, closing our eyes with complacency, shutting our ears to the clarion call of duty, the clash of battle, the cries of the stricken? As well might we slumber in the tomb with that Egyptian king who for thousands of years held locked in his dead hand the sleeping potentiality of mighty harvests.

Then awake! thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead: the world hath need of thee. Rouse thee from the dull lethargy of indifference, and disclose the costly treasure thy right hand holdeth! Here is hid the wisdom of the ages,—aspirations of poets, meditations of seers. Scatter abroad, and spare not! To-day is thy opportunity, and the field of thy labor is the limit of thy horizon. Be thine the highest or be thine the lowliest sphere, thy mission is the same,—to advance the cause of man, to foster in his heart the golden grain of virtue, to extirpate the weeds of ignorance and vice. Though but a link in the

endless chain of being, thou art still *a link*; and, though thou be but the weakest, yet in the power of the weakest is the integrity of the whole chain tested.

“The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few.” Work thou to-day, looking backward to Jesus and forward to his second coming; for, assuredly, he will again come in the larger development of man. And thy life shall live and grow and blossom and bear fruit in that larger development, and “generations yet unborn shall rise up and call thee blessed.”

IMMORTALITY.

“ If a man die, shall he live again ? ” — JOB xiv., 14.

IN this question, the most ardent yearning of the human heart is expressed, “ If a man die, shall he live again ? ” It was asked at the first dawn of reason in the primal savage. It is asked in the intellectual noontide of this nineteenth century. It will be asked as the final night of oblivion descends on the last denizen of earth.

Civilization intensifies this yearning : barbarism degrades it ; yet, even for the wild Indian, there exists a future life in the happy hunting-grounds of the *Great Manitou*.

The Mohammedan, helped by the hands of *houris* over the abyss of hell,—bridged by a sabre’s edge,—enters paradise, and atones for a life of abstinence with an eternity of excess.

The Hindu, passing through countless forms, arrives at last at the supreme state of perpetual felicity. His senses trebly steeped in the dull *Lethe* of forgetfulness, he knows not, recks not of past, present, or future. He is become a divine nonentity, a glorified cipher in that vast sum whereof Brahma is the sole unit.

That instinct in man, which promises a life be-

yond the grave, is undoubtedly inherent. It antedates all records that remain to us, and is at least shadowed in the sacred writings of all nations. True it was only an incident to the early Jewish faith, but of Christianity it is the corner-stone.

Still, in this age, all beliefs are questioned. The materialist holds immortality a mere fanciful creation of the brain, utterly opposed to sober reason and to all the teachings of the book of nature. "As the mighty oak-tree, born of an acorn, matures, bears fruit, and falls into decay, so lordly man [he says] fulfils his mission in the propagation of his kind, pays back to nature those elements he borrowed, only for a time, and becomes once more part and parcel of the insensate clod."

So far as man's physical structure is concerned, these are facts, and must be admitted as they stand. But what of the intelligence which marked him in life, and which surely was as much himself as was his physical structure,—nay, was not this in fact himself?

"His intelligence," is answered, "merges in the general floating mass of intelligence that pervades and directs all matter."

Every theory honestly advanced touching a vital subject demands our honest consideration. That age of the world is past when schoolmen could safely retire to their fortress of theological dogma, and by dint of mere vantage-ground bid defiance to the sappers of scepticism, the miners of reason, and the explosives of common sense. The thinker

of to-day cannot afford to rest idly on the dim traditions of the past. The world is progressive in every department, and he who enters the arena of thought must keep pace with the times.

The sole aim of all honest investigation is truth. The sole aim of all honest discussion is to teach the truth to others. Our prayer to God always should be,—let our prayer to him now be,—“Give me the truth, though it slay me!” Then let us calmly seek the truth in this matter; and, finding that, whatever the result, let us abide thereby.

Every reasonable man is prepared to admit the existence of that subtle force exercised by each individual upon his fellows, which we call influence. But I doubt if we ever realize, even approximately, the full effect of our influence upon the world at large.

Science tells us that every vibration of the vocal chords causes a corresponding vibration of the surrounding air-waves; and the ripple thus produced is transmitted in turn to others, and yet other waves beyond, even as still water is put in motion by a falling pebble.

In like manner are we encompassed by the waves of humanity. In like manner are these human waves affected by us. Each one of us, no matter how high or how low his or her condition, is daily exercising some degree of influence, either for good or for ill, not only upon the generation now existent, but also upon all generations to come. There is no waste in the realm of matter. There is no waste in

the realm of mind. Our word or our act does not perform its whole mission, when it reaches its immediate object : its mission is to all time.

The champions of the truth in the past are still with us in the present. They are not dead, they do not even sleep, but are to-day more actively engaged by far in the advancement of humanity than when they trod the earth. The circle of each has widened, and is ever widening. Then, they were poor, persecuted, and despised, and had but few followers. Now, the nations unite to do them honor, and kings bow down before them.

Here, then, is an immortality of influence on earth admitted by the materialist. But is this all? Is there nothing beyond?

When the poor Hindu mother, carrying her stricken babe in her arms, asked of Buddha a remedy for death, he told her to procure mustard-seed from a house where none had died. And, when she returned from the fruitless quest, saying,—

“ Ah, sir, I could not find a single house
Where there was mustard-seed and none had died ! ”

He sought to comfort her by the reflection,—

“ The whole wide world weeps with thy woe ! ”

But how barren of comfort was this for the bereaved mother,—

“ That loss is common would not make
My own less bitter, rather more.”

The bruised spirit cries out in anguish against such

vain solace, and demands imperatively,—Is there nothing beyond?

That there is cannot be demonstrated; for no traveller hath e'er returned, once having crossed that bourne. That there is not cannot be maintained; for the soul springs up indignant, and gives the lie to reason. Thus, we are thrown back upon analogy and induction, and must argue from ascertained facts to the general principle toward which they seem to lead.

Appealing, then, back to nature, the illustration advanced by our opponent, as the winds of autumn sweep through the forest, chilling the sap and stripping the leaves, might not the trees, gazing sadly on that one of their number first denuded, and now standing gaunt and apparently lifeless against the sky, say, "And this is the end"?

Yet the spring-time shall reclothe the forest with beauty as before. Surely, herein, nature teaches immortality, and not death.

Again, we have seen that the belief in a future life has existed among all races, in all countries, from all times whereof any record remains to us. Let us go a step further.

All nature breathes of law. The tiniest atom and the mightiest globe are alike pervaded thereby. Were it then reasonable to suppose that the mind of man has been exempted from its all-controlling power? The belief in immortality having been ever existent among all conditions of men, in all portions of the earth, may we not justly assume this

to be a law of mind, as indelibly stamped by the Divine Author as are the many laws which govern and control matter ?

Again, man alone, of all the animals, possesses a mind godlike in its scope and power. By means thereof, he has triumphed over the forces of nature and fettered the elements. Winds blow to waft him, oceans are his thoroughfares, the lightnings are his messengers. He has made good the elfin boast, and "girdled the earth in forty minutes." Yet is he satisfied ? No. He is as keen to-day in the pursuit of knowledge as were his ancestors in Egypt five thousand years ago. In wisdom there is no satiety, since she ever recreates the hunger that she feeds. The heart stretches out her hands toward God, and the soul thirsteth for Him that is her life. Yet,

" If man is only born to die,
Whence his inheritance of hope ?
Whereof to him alone are lent
Riches that never can be spent ? "

Again, many of the lower animals exhibit intelligence to a degree bordering on the human. But, so far as we may judge, these creatures rest perfectly satisfied with their several conditions. Not so man.

Let any individual fix his hope on some definite goal, and let him attain his heart's desire to the utmost: is he satisfied ?

No. The goal is now removed further up the ascent or takes a different form. When this is

attained, yet there is a feeling of disappointment and discontent, and so on until the end. And, now, this goal is placed "beyond the veil," and the dim eyes are striving to pierce futurity, in search of that vague prize which, so often found in fancy, has ever in fact eluded the anxious grasp.

I have seen an artist stand before a picture his hand had wrought, and, while thronging multitudes rained plaudits on the work, his brow alone was clouded with dissatisfaction and gloom. They saw but the painted canvas, and to them it glowed with divine beauty; but he saw the ideal fancy which prompted his effort, and mocking demons shouted "Failure!" in his ears.

I ask, then, if there be nothing beyond this world, why are we not satisfied with the prizes it affords? If our hope of immortality be vain, why does not earth life satisfy soul hunger?

Going a step further in this discussion, let us apply a simple test. Let each one ask himself or herself these questions, "Who am I? What am I?" then follow the thought out to its logical result.

These garments are not *I*. When they are removed, I yet remain.

Is this body I? Let us remove it piece by piece, even as we remove our garments; and, so long as the soul is here, let it assert its presence.

Cut off these arms, "yet I am here!" These limbs, "yet I am here!" Dissect this trunk, "yet I am here!" Even when the axe has fallen, and the severed head of Walter Raleigh is held up

by the rude hand of the executioner, the reproachful eyes turn, and say,—oh, how eloquently! —“Yet I am here!” And as the death-damps gather on that broad brow, and the soul—freed from its prisoning labyrinth of nerves and tissues—wings its way through space, may not our soul sense almost catch the exultant spirit cry, “Yet I am here, and I am immortal!”

We all have moments—more or less frequent—during which the individual seems lifted nearer to God and to heaven; when the soul, like a caged eagle, beats against the bars of its dungeon, and struggles to be free. At such moments, the veil seems drawn aside, and immortality stands out to our quickened vision,—not only as a hope, not only as a belief, but as something we know to be a fact.

At such moments, the logic of the materialist is as dry chaff before the whirlwind of God's coming. At such moments, I laugh to scorn the man who denies that somewhere, safe in the fostering arms of Infinite Love, our loved ones watch and wait, to welcome us home.

This innate consciousness of man's unending existence was the grandest emphasis of Jesus' life and teaching. Throughout his whole career,—in season and out of season, at all times and in all places,—he ceased not to insist, with the utmost confidence, on the absolute truth of this doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

To the Sadducees,—the materialists of his day,—

he said, "*God is not the God of THE DEAD, but of THE LIVING ; for ALL LIVE unto him.*"

How great, then, is our responsibility ! Here is an immortality of influence on earth. Here is an immortality of individual soul life.

May God open the eyes of each to realize this responsibility, and quicken us by his grace to shape our lives accordingly !

FAITH.

“ Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him : but I will maintain mine own ways before him.” — JOB xiii., 15.

SUCH was the grand resolve of pious Job.

Stripped of his possessions, his children destroyed, his life rendered miserable by loathsome disease, he yet trusted in God. The darker the night of his affliction, the brighter shone the lamp of his faith. Upbraided by his wife for what seemed to her an ill-founded trust, he remained constant. Wearied by the hypocrisy of his friends, he opposed their reasoning, yet maintained the honor of God and affirmed the justice of the Most High.

Yet his was no blind submission to the arbitrary decree of a higher power. Throughout the dialogue, we find ourselves brought constantly face to face with that great riddle which has perplexed the ages, and which challenges our faith to-day, “ Why are the righteous afflicted, while the wicked prosper ? ”

It is useless to deny the fact, for it is patent to all. God makes no distinctions in his treatment of men. “ He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.”

Nor can we evade the question by answering

that none are in fact righteous. Righteousness and wickedness are comparative terms. Judged by the standard of God, the righteousness of man would be vile indeed. Judged by the standard of man, we find many men whose lives commend themselves to our admiration and respect. Common sense teaches us that the unit of comparison must be of a class with the thing compared. We do not compare stones with trees, or animals with men. Neither need we look for infinite holiness in finite humanity.

Judged by the standard of man, Job was righteous; and, conscious of his integrity, he did not hesitate to affirm it: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him."

Whoever was the author of the story of Job (and, unfortunately, we have no clue to his identity), he was certainly far in advance of the then prevalent religious thought. With a courage which would be commendable in an advanced thinker of to-day, yet with exceeding delicacy of statement, and in a profoundly religious spirit, he arraigns the apparent imperfections of the divine plan, and seeks in this seeming discord for the key to a higher harmony. And, though he fails to find that key, he yet believes the harmony exists, and, submitting to the divine will, kisses the rod that smites him.

We find a similar lesson conveyed in the story of Abraham. Long childless, in his old age a son is granted to him; and it is promised that he shall be the father of many nations. And yet, as if in retraction of that promise, the commandment comes,

"Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

However monstrous the idea of human sacrifice may be to us, it was familiar enough in those early times. The theory of sacrifice among the Hebrews and other primitive nations was that the more valuable the gift, the more acceptable would it be to the Deity. Thus the firstlings of the flock from Abel found favor with Yahweh, but the fruit of the ground brought by Cain was despised. In like manner, a bullock was regarded as a more honorable sacrifice than a lamb, and a man than a bullock. Captives taken in battle were the usual victims, but children of the household also frequently suffered; and an only child, or the best beloved, was considered the most acceptable offering of all.

Thus we read of Jephthah slaying his daughter in fulfilment of a vow; and the prophet Micah refers to the custom in these words: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

But, while abhorring this barbarous practice which doubtless suggested the story of Abraham to its author, we must not allow our disgust to blind the

eyes of our mind to the really valuable lesson of faith herein contained,—the faith of a father willing to sacrifice the hope of his life, his only and much-loved child, upon the altar of duty.

In many respects, this picture far surpasses the other ; for, while the afflictions of Job came upon him suddenly, and from without, Abraham was appointed the executioner of his own hope, and, as if to refine the torture of the ordeal, was sent on a three days' journey to the place of sacrifice, carrying the lad with him ; yet he submitted without a murmur to the decree of Heaven.

Such deeds of heroism are not without parallel in real life, and in our own time. The same spirit of faith which enabled Job, weighed down by affliction, to affirm the goodness of God ; the fervent trust which nerved Abraham uncomplainingly to offer up his only son as a sacrifice, is abroad in the world to-day, and, moreover, is to-day dignified by a higher conception of the Divine. For example, how often do we find persons weighed down by sorrow, and afflicted with sickness, yet maintaining their faith in the goodness and mercy of God ! How many thousands of fathers and mothers in our late war offered up their loved ones on the altar of humanity, and said, "Thy will be done" ! The faith of Job, the trust of Abraham, find followers daily in every home. For we all have our sorrows to bear, we all have our sacrifices to make ; and, were it not for that divine spirit of faith and trust breathed into our souls, it would be hard for us indeed.

Yet faith is in man a plant of tardy growth, and is only evolved by slow degrees from lower phases of mental activity. Thus, commencing with the lowest savage, we find that, strictly speaking, he has no faith. When he first attains to self-consciousness, he regards himself as the centre of the universe, which revolves about him, and is for his especial use. As he advances into the second stage of his spiritual curriculum, he recognizes a power without himself, and beyond his control; and, feeling—as might a lawful monarch—dethroned by a more powerful usurper, he assumes an attitude of antagonism to his environment.

In the third stage, finding the environment too strong for him, he seeks to propitiate it by sacrifice. But, failing in this also, and still suffering at the hands of an unknown power, he at last sullenly submits to what cannot be helped.

Thus far, the plane of faith has not been reached. But now let abject fear give place to reverent awe, and selfish sacrifice to loving worship, and sullen submission to joyful self-surrender. Then faith shall have her full and perfect work.

Tennyson says,—

“ There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.”

And he says truly. Job, with all his doubts and questionings, showed more faith by far than did his friends, who stood blindly by the creed of their time, “ which wise men have told from their fathers.”

But he depended rather on his own observation than on blind tradition handed down by the fathers. Common sense taught him that, humanly speaking, absolute justice finds no place in this world; and common honesty obliged him to maintain that fact. But, in spite of doubt, his heart clung to God; and, submitting to the decree of Heaven, he took refuge in the utter incomprehensibleness of the divine thought, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." His friends, on the other hand, tried to slur over the inequalities of life, and held him impious in even recognizing them.

But what folly was this! We all know that, by the law of nature, the sins of the parent are visited upon the child; but we all know equally well that, humanly speaking, that law is not just. This was the position taken by Job, and it has never been answered. We are compelled, therefore, to the conclusion that there must be a higher law, which we at present know not, and which vindicates the ways of God to men.

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, we are brought constantly face to face with that old-time fallacy, that prosperity is the mark of God's favor, and adversity the signal of his wrath. So firmly was this belief fixed in the Israelitish mind, that the writers of the Old Testament invariably measured a man's piety by his wealth, and the reverse. Yet, were this indeed true, the noblest of our race in every age must have been the condemned of God. Tried by this rule, the life of Jesus was a failure; for poverty and suffering were his lot throughout.

And here we mark the direct antagonism existing between the Hebrew and Christian formulas of faith; for he, going to the other extreme, regarded wealth as an absolute hindrance to salvation, and made poverty a pre-requisite of discipleship. "One thing thou lackest: go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me."

"How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!"

By such errors of philosophy, our leader is doubly endeared to us; for they prove his humanity. He was the great radical of his time, and in such sayings as these we find the excessive reaction of a noble mind rebelling against the sordid faith of the day, which pictured God as a paymaster, and his servants as workers for a wage.

But, on the other hand, he required a wealth of soul in his disciples of which the old dispensation knew nothing. The rule of conduct he gave them was the highest conceivable: "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

The faith he required of them was an absolute faith, founded in love to God and man: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Here he prescribes *the act* of faith in our love to God, and *the test* of faith in our love to man.

Nor was he satisfied with love to friends only

"For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?"

"Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you."

We are apt to think this a hard injunction to follow, yet that it is possible for man so to do was proven by Jesus himself; for, nailed upon the cross, he prayed for those who placed him there, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

In this doctrine of universal love which Jesus taught, we find the highest form of faith. It is not a matter of creed, it is but the simple trust of the little child. It is the absolute self-surrender of love, which seeks not to define or formulate, but only *loves*.

We hear much of unbelief in the world to-day, and the term "atheist" is freely used. For my part, I do not think there is now, or ever has been, an "atheist" in the world. I have known men who called themselves "atheists," and who honestly thought they were "atheists," yet abounded in the fruits of faith; who succored the widow and the fatherless, and, while doubting all formulas of God, did deeds which proved their faith in the Divine. He who loves man loves God through man; and, though with his latest breath he deny God, yet his life denies his denial, and affirms his faith in God.

"There is no unbelief.

Whoever plants a seed beneath the sod,
And waits to see it push away the clod,
Trusts he in God.

“There is no unbelief.
Whoever says, when clouds are in the sky,
‘Be patient, heart! Light breaketh by and by,’
Trusts the Most High.

“There is no unbelief.
For, day by day, and night by night, unconsciously,
The heart lives still by faith, though lips deny,
God knoweth why.”

In the Vedic literature of India, we find this aphorism: “He who thinks he knows God knows him not. He who thinks he knows him not, he knows him.”

I quoted this saying to a Baptist brother, not long since; and so much struck was he by the force and beauty of the underlying thought, that he declared he would use it in his next sermon.

And, after all, what matters the fashion of the theological flag under which we sail? Be it Episcopal or Baptist or Methodist or Presbyterian or Unitarian; ay, be it Buddhist or Mohammedan, or whatever it may be, though we worship in differing phrase, yet we all worship the same God. O my brothers, what matters the name, if only the heart be true? What matters the creed, if only the life be right? “Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

But, on the other hand, what formula of faith shall cover the deformity of an evil life? In the parable of the two sons commanded by their father

to go work in his vineyard, he who refused in word, but acceded in deed, was justified rather than he who said, "I go, sir," and went not. Faith and works are the two oars of the boat. We make the best and steadiest progress by pulling both; but if we can have but one only, then let that one be *works*, by all means. Thus the apostle James says: "What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him? . . . Wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren? . . . For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead."

And Jesus said: "By their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

Nor are these sentiments confined to Christianity only. They rest not upon creed, but are of the very essence of religion, and pervade the spirit of *all* beliefs. Thus we find Mahomet teaching his disciples, "One hour in the execution of justice is worth seventy years of prayer."

Emerson says truly; "When you define God, he ceases to be God." And why should we seek to define him? Is it not enough to feel that he is, and to rest assured that he careth for us?

In every blade of grass I see
A witness to his tender care;
He blossoms in the fruitful tree,
His whispers thrill the listening air.

His footprints flow in gentle rills,
His glances wake the morning ray ;
He sits upon the evening hills,
And paints the steps of parting day.

He opens in the buds of spring,
He smiles where summer harvests glow ;
His peace the autumn breezes bring,
His winter wraps the earth in snow.

THE UNREALIZED IDEALS OF LIFE.

"Now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I have been known."—I. COR. xiii., 12.

THE mirror of the ancients here referred to was a disc of polished metal attached to a carved handle of wood or ivory. It was used not only at the toilet, but also for purposes of divination and the forecasting of future events. The reflection seen therein was but dim and uncertain, as compared with that of our modern mirrors of glass; and this fact must be borne in mind to a proper understanding of the significance of our text. In the revised New Testament, the word "riddle" is given in the margin as an equivalent for *mirror*; so that we might as justly read the passage, "Now we see in a *riddle*, darkly."

It is related of Michael Angelo that, standing one day, mallet and chisel in hand, before a block of marble, he cried out in sudden ecstasy to the stone, "Oh, what a vision of marvellous beauty dost thou unfold!"

Do you suppose he ever realized from the block the conception which that moment entered his mind?

I question it. The ideals of great minds are never realized here, for the simple reason that their power of imagination far transcends their capacity of execution. Only base minds rest satisfied under the chain of limitation that fetters the hands of men. As we painfully ascend the scale of being, our horizon of capacity widens; yet imagination and desire ever ply beyond the farthest limit, and traverse the waste of infinity, looking vainly for a resting-place. The soul,

Like some proud eagle which was wont,
From distant skies, to scan the plain,
Entrapped, now vainly strives to mount,
And madly wrestles with its chain.

As if to illustrate this fact of unrest and dissatisfaction which pervades our human consciousness, it happens that Michael Angelo has left upon his greatest work in marble the imprint, as it were, of the noble discontent that filled his soul.

In the church of St. Pietro in Vinculo, at Rome, the visitor's attention is arrested by a sculpture of exceeding merit. It represents the gigantic figure of a man, in sitting posture, dressed in flowing robes, and wearing on his head the typical horns of inspiration. The figure, and the chair in which it is seated, are carved from a single block of white marble. You recognize the picture at once. It is the "Moses" of Michael Angelo.

Gazing in rapture on that wonderful creation, awed by its dignity, charmed by its grace and beauty,

we say that here, at least, the artist must have attained to his ideal, and have transfixed it in marble, for all the world to gaze upon. But, looking closely, running down the bare right knee of the figure, we detect a dark undulating line, and see that at this point the marble is fractured, as though by violence. Yet this unsightly flaw becomes perhaps the most interesting thing about the statue when we have learned its history.

Our guide-book tells us that, filled with a wondrous conception of the great Hebrew prophet-leader, Michael Angelo had toiled for many months to evolve that conception from the stone. Rising early and working late, he spared neither time nor strength. Gradually the figure grew in symmetry and beauty. Now the mallet struck more carefully, the chisel moved more deftly in giving the finishing touches to the work. At last all has been done that human skill can do, and the figure stands boldly forth, a magnificent counterfeit of life,—yet only a *counterfeit*. And the soul of the great artist is wrung as he realizes that, after all his toil, the result is but senseless stone, hewn to the similitude of a man.

Standing before it in a fervor of anguished aspiration, in an agony of weary disappointment, he cried out, "Oh, speak, my Moses!" and, raising his mallet, let it fall heavily on the bared knee. More heavily than he had thought; for the fractured marble to this day bears witness that what seems to us an almost perfect creation was to the artist but another failure.

This absolute certainty of failure to realize the ideal is the stumbling-block of all art, and goes far toward breeding the morbid and gloomy habit of mind which frequently possesses professional and even amateur artists.

There was never a picture painted,
There was never a poem sung,
But the heart of the artist fainted,
And the poet's soul was wrung;
There was never a grand conception
In the veined marble wrought,
But the hour of its inception
With bitterness was fraught;
For each knew that his fond endeavor,
Though he strove with utmost might,
Must fail of its meaning ever,
As darkness fails from light.

And, in a humble way, we are all artists and sculptors in the studio of life. Or, as Longfellow has it,

"All are architects of fate,
Working in these walls of Time";

and each has his aspirations toward the unattainable, his ideal imaginings never to be realized on earth. They take their rise in the sources of our life; they grow with our growth and strengthen with our strength. A divine unrest, an unsatisfied longing for we know not what, takes possession of the soul, and remains with it throughout life. Who shall say that it leaves the soul at death? May not this, in fact, be the germinant force which shall impel it onward and upward through all the vicissitudes of eternity?

The question arises, then, Since we here fail to realize our ideals, shall we cease to pursue them? God forbid! for then progress would cease utterly. Though Michael Angelo failed to embody in the marble the vision of his imagination, yet he created that which has been a joy to millions, and has helped to humanize and civilize the race. For every form of beauty, whether natural or artificial, be it autumn sunset or dream on canvas, be it statue wrought in marble or wild flower of the forest; every harmonious sound, be it song of bird or note of music; every evil impulse of the heart subdued, every good deed done,—each fulfils its appointed end in the advancement of man.

“I count this thing to be grandly true :
That a noble deed is a step toward God,
Lifting the soul from the common sod
To a purer air and a broader view.”

And, in these multiform failures, disappointments, and unsatisfied longings of our human life, surely the reverent soul may trace the workings of a divine plan. Progress is the immutable law of God. But suppose our every attempt yielded its full fruition of result; that success was the certain reward of effort? Then, progress would surely cease; for there would be no incentive to exertion. The savage of the Tropics sits beneath his fruit tree, feeds lazily on the food prepared for him by over-bountiful nature, and remains to the last a *savage*. The savage of less favored zones compels

tardy nature to yield her store, and emerges victorious from the conflict, *a man*. Heaven itself must be a state of striving and progression, else to us it were not heaven. A heaven of idleness, with all accomplished, and nothing to strive after, must become a very hell of satiety and disgust.

You say that frequent disappointment naturally results in discouragement. True. But suppose that a philanthropist labors year by year among the outcast and depraved, yet makes no visible progress. Shall he assume therefore that his labor has been vain? Surely not. Even thus the sower casts his seed into the dark, cold ground, and hopes for its fruition. It may germinate and grow, it may fail and decay; a thousand chances may prevent. But, did he withhold his hand for fear of failure, there would be no bread. Your mission is the advancement of man. Your life is but a drop in the great ocean of existence. Yet every drop has its place, and the aggregate of all floats many ships. What if you cannot see the direct result of your effort? Though the world moves slowly, still it moves, and you are a part of the motive power. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."

Our great difficulty is want of faith. We gaze into the darkened mirror, and complain because only a distorted reflection is returned. Rather should we thank the Giver of all good that any reflection is

vouchsafed to us, and that the mirror grows clearer from generation to generation. Rather should the gloomy page of history serve as a foil to the clearer message of to-day; and, though we may not sun ourselves in the full glory of noontide, we can at least detect the daybreak blushing in the east.

In the last throes of our great national struggle,—a struggle in the name of God and enlightenment for the uplifting of man,—the eyes of a world rested on one central figure.

Reared in poverty, with muscles hardened by toil, Abraham Lincoln had risen, by patient merit and native force, to be chief magistrate of a great nation. He took the helm in troubled times, and safely steered the ship of state through all the perils of civil warfare. Already the haven of peace had been sighted, already the bar had been passed, and we all breathed more freely,—when our captain fell, stricken down by the dastard hand of an assassin. At the sound of that shot, a wail of unbelief went forth from the hearts of men,—“Can God exist, and such things be?”

Yet the death of our leader cemented more closely the Union he had saved; for friends and foes vied in condemnation of the deed, and mingled their tears above his clay. To-day there is no North and no South, but a great and prosperous nation, one and undivided, whose remotest citizens clasp hands in friendly intercourse, and twine garlands of palmetto and pine, to deck the graves of our common dead.

Then we saw “as in a mirror, darkly”; but

already we can realize that this "our light affliction, which was for the moment, hath worked for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory."

Not long since, we watched the two great political parties of our country struggling for the mastery. Their conventions met, and leaders were selected. When the name of James A. Garfield was announced, we questioned eagerly, "Who is he?" for he was, comparatively speaking, an unknown man. On the day of his election, I stood in a great city, and heard foul-mouthed Slander, urged on by party hatred, do her worst. A few months later, I stood again among a dense crowd in which all party lines were obliterated by a common woe. A crowd who, with blanched faces and quivering lips, scanned the bulletin announcing that once again the chosen leader of our nation had fallen by the bullet of an assassin. We all shared the days, weeks, months of suspense which followed: a *nation* watching by the bedside of him who had so quickly won for himself a home in every heart, a place by every fireside.

In a Southern city, I stood amid thousands as the train sped by, bearing our stricken one to the seashore. I saw tears start from eyes all unused to weep, and roll down the scarred cheeks of veterans who had withstood him on the field of strife. I heard a thousand lips, unaccustomed to prayer, unite in a heartfelt petition wafted up through the clear summer air unto the throne of grace, "God bless him, and restore him to health."

Yet he died. And your tears and mine were mingled with those of the bereaved wife, with those of the aged mother in that distant hamlet. But not from ocean to ocean only, not only from city to city of this Union was the pulse of sorrow stirred; but the great heart of humanity responded to the divine influence of sympathy, and one touch of nature made the whole world kin.

What, I ask, were his few remaining years of life to this? Was it a little thing that hostile nations and diverse creeds and party factions should forget their differences, even for a day, to weep above that bier?

Though in our sorrow the mirror seemed dark indeed, yet already we realize the hand of God in the event; for, fruitful as was that life, and abundant in promise, yet his death hath borne fruit in the hearts and lives of men a myriad-fold increased.

The saddest cry this world has ever heard was that last despairing wail from the lips of Jesus on the cross, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

It was the mourning cry of a great soul over what seemed to him the wasted effort of a life. In all the fervor of an enthusiastic nature, in all the purity of a noble heart, he had truly walked with God; and, inspired by that communion, he had not hesitated to claim kinship with the Divine for the sons of men. He had gone further. He had looked beyond the present, with its baseness and littleness of purpose, and in the horoscope of a far future he had seen

men—as Jacob saw the angels in his dream—treading their low desires under foot, and rising as it were on stepping-stones of their dead selves to worthily partake of their spiritual inheritance.

He had devoted his life to the redemption of man from the bondage of sin; and now, nailed to the ignominious cross, scourged and buffeted, mocked and jeered by those he had sought to save, denied and forsaken by his friends, is it to be wondered at that at last his great heart quailed; that, in that last bitter moment, the retrospect of life seemed to disclose but a vain struggle after an impossible ideal, and that even God had forsaken and cast him off?

Yet he saw but in a mirror, darkly; for the hour of his seeming defeat was the hour of his greatest triumph. Every pang he suffered strengthened his cause. Every drop of blood he shed vitalized and made fruitful the truths he had uttered. Had he lived,—humanly speaking,—Christianity, of small beginning, might have been of as short duration. Like a thousand other faiths, started by other reformers, its light would probably have flickered and gone out, in time. But his death, so cruel and unmerited, coming as a climax to a life so pure and good, arrested the thought of men, and compelled their attention.

Truth is mighty, and must prevail; but how shall truth prevail if it be not heard? The death of Jesus aroused the sympathies of men, and thus bespoke their attention to the truth he taught. Pregnant of vital force, it took root in their hearts: it

grew and bore fruit. Its influence has steadily increased with the lapse of time; and, to-day, four hundred millions of our race worship in the name of Him who esteemed his life wasted, and himself forgotten of God.

O my brothers, what a lesson is here, if we will but heed it! "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord."

Every aspiration, every ideal longing that visits our life, is an impulse from the Divine toward higher things. And, though they often seem to us unrealized and futile, if they serve to incite us to honest effort, they are not sent in vain. God giveth the increase, but he giveth it in his own way, and at his own time. Now we sow in tears, but we shall yet reap in joy. "Now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I have been known."

HOPE.

"I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more."
— PSALM lxxi., 14.

THE English poet Rogers spent twenty years in writing a poem on the pleasures of memory. Surely, a lifetime would be too short to sing the pleasures of hope. And when shall we find a more fitting season to sing such a pæan than now,—when gray-beard Winter hath fled, and jocund Spring adorns herself as a bride, and, coming forth arrayed in a thousand delicate tints, blushes and thrills beneath the fervent glances of the amorous sun.

Every wood and covert is vocal with the songs of birds, every blade of grass is jubilant with the hum of insects. The squirrel scolds noisily at the passer-by, or leaps from branch to branch in play. The wild rabbit has stripped her breast of down to make a warm, soft bed for her little ones. The swallows, like swiftly flying shuttles, weave their web of play over the glassy surface of the pond, or, chattering in noisy convention, decide on a place of abode. The robin calls to his mate, and they take sweet counsel together, as they carry materials and build the nest which shall shelter their future brood. The cattle, freed from the bondage of the stall, roam the mead-

ows and daintily crop the succulent herbage. The young lambs bleat on the hillside, or totter on uncertain legs after their careful dams. All the heart of nature rejoices, for it is the spring-time of hope ; and man, the crown of all, rejoices with all.

In the Greek legend, Pandora is represented as having been sent by the gods to men, bearing a box filled with winged blessings. But, carelessly raising the lid to peep within, all escaped save one,—only hope remained to cheer the race.

O greatest gift from the Giver of all good gifts to men, divine hope, I sing thy praise ! I see thee in the love-light of the mother's eye, as she bends over her sleeping babe, and casts the horoscope of a glad future, when he, her son, shall mould the decrees of destiny, and shape the future of a world. I hear thee in the prattling of the infant, as he lisps his aspiration toward that far-off time when he shall attain to the stature of manhood, and by the might of his puissant arm win victory over fate. In the calmer outlook of maturity, or in man's fevered striving for the toys of sense, again I know thee. And yet again, when, tottering on the brink, he trembling stands, and dares to plunge, leaving the event to God.

Truly, we are cradled in hope, we live in hope, we die in hope.

And why should we not hope ? Hope is the earnest of fruition. "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." Hope is the whispered promise of God. The impulse of life is ever

upward and onward toward perfection ; and the cry of the psalmist is the cry of creation : "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God : when shall I come and appear before God ?"

Hope is the main-spring of action. Without it, nothing would be attempted, nothing accomplished. The fields must remain untilled, the seed unsown, business must stagnate. The streets of our great cities must be covered with grass. This active, eager life of ours must shortly lapse into a very death in life, if we had not hope.

You say that despair has sometimes achieved success when hope has failed. This is, I think, a popular mistake. The despair which works and wins, which fights and conquers, is in fact but hope disguised.

The bankrupt who commits forgery to avert impending ruin may be said to have been impelled thereto by despair ; but, in fact, he hoped against hope that he should yet retrieve his losses, and conceal his crime before discovery.

The Spartan three hundred at Thermopylæ spent their lives not in the fury of despair, as is generally stated, but in the heroism of hope : first, the hope of vengeance on their foes ; and, second, the hope of immortal remembrance.

Despair, pure and simple, is a negative condition, and the victim thereof remains passive. Thus, afflicted Job, having lost all hope, sat silent in his

misery; but, when the first shock was past, hope reasserted herself, and, while affirming that he had no hope, he yet expressed himself in the language of hope. Hear him: "And where is now my hope? as for my hope, who shall see it?" But he adds: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."

But, while according to hope her full meed of praise, we must not confound hope and knowledge. Tennyson says, in "In Memoriam,"—

"We have but faith: we cannot know;
For knowledge is of things we see."

And Paul writes to the Romans, "By hope were we saved: but hope that is seen is not hope: for who hopeth for that which he seeth?"

No matter how strong our faith, how fervent our hope, we cannot predicate knowledge of that which our eyes do not behold. To do this, be he preacher or layman, is to affirm what is false.

I do not *know* that wrongs are righted
After these frail bodies die;
I do not *know* that, wisdom-lighted,
There lives a life beyond the sky:
I only *hope* these things are so,
But that they are I do not *know*.

I do not *know* there is a heaven,
Nor even that a God there be;

I do not *know* that, sin-forgiven,
My soul shall live eternally :
I only *hope* these things are so,
But that they are I do not *know*.

Let us be honest with ourselves and with each other. Let us not abuse common sense by abuse of terms. Hope is the anticipation of a future fact. Knowledge is the mental imprint of a present one. If it were true that "coming' events cast their shadows before," we might style hope the advanced shadow of knowledge. When, at a funeral, Robert G. Ingersoll affirmed his creed to be "Help for the living, hope for the dead," he really said all that the most enthusiastic Calvinist can say with truth ; for the dead have passed beyond the bounds of knowledge, and are become the subjects of hope.

For centuries, the whole Christian world regarded the Book of Revelation as a verbal photograph of heaven, a very guide-book to the New Jerusalem. So accurately had it been surveyed and measured, so minutely was every detail described, that believers on their death-beds studied the account as travellers study the chart of a foreign land which they intend to visit. To-day, we realize that this assumed statement of facts is but a religious fiction, a poem of devout aspiration, grand, beautiful, sublime, but quite as unreal as Tennyson's "Lotus Land" or Hesiod's "Islands of the Blessed." The difficulty with this author was that he affirmed knowledge, when he only had hope. Our faith in God and in the future life, to-day, is as strong as was his ; but, did a

preacher of to-day appear before you in such assertive spirit, and venture a detailed description of the Supreme Being, and of the future state, portraying its pleasures and its duties, and even describing the garments worn by disembodied spirits, courtesy might keep you in your seats, but the very limit of courtesy would hardly repress a smile.

But, while disavowing knowledge of that which we see not, so long as faith and hope abide with us we can afford to wait. By inspecting the bud, we may not certainly describe the lovely rose which shall be; yet within its folds the rose lurks in embryo, and the present bud is an earnest of the future flower. So, gazing upon man, we are inspired by the conviction that in him lurk possibilities not realized on earth; that here is but the embryo of a future as far transcending the present as the rose surpasses the bud.

Imagination is the handmaid of hope. Following the illustration we have just used, on another line of thought, while from the bud we may not accurately describe the rose which shall be, the scope of imagination in regard thereto is boundless. And so with the future state. With John on Patmos, we may revel in anticipation, and picture the scenes we hope some day to see. Even as the puny waif of a great city, bred in misery and squalor, dreams of the glad country, with its bright blue skies and arching trees and murmuring streams, with its green fields and gay flowers and glad songs of birds, — even thus, I say, may we fairly exercise our imag-

ination to depict that future life which we know not ; for imagination, like hope, is the gift of God, and is sent to be our solace and our stay. Nor need we fear that imagination will surpass the reality ; for, taking this wondrous world in which we find ourselves as the earnest of what shall be, surely we may affirm with Paul, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

It is not the realism of the Book of Revelation to which I object, but the nature of that realism. It is the realism of a semi-barbaric age. It is a realism of golden streets, and gates set with precious stones ; of blaring trumpets and flaming swords ; of intense light and glitter and glare. It is not the picture of a place where one could feel at home. There is a metallic ring to everything. If we found shrubs or trees there, they must surely be but metal counterfeits, painted to represent nature. As a child, I remember picturing the glaring light reflected from those golden streets, until even the thought made my head ache. Think of a dear little baby wandering desolate over those metal pavements, in that intense light.

But now turn from this picture to the one painted by Miss Phelps in her exquisite little book, *The Gates Ajar*. Here all is home-like. There are shady trees and green lawns and murmuring brooks and birds singing overhead ; color and sound meeting and mingling in half-tints and half-tones. The

little ones, who passed from our sight years ago, are romping at their games, or learning lessons from wise and gentle teachers. Father and mother are not forgotten, but their coming is gladly looked for, and the days counted until they shall arrive. The friends whose eyes closed long since are here. Freed from the thralldom of the flesh, their souls expand beneath the sunshine of divine love, and drink in the fulness of the perfection of life.

Here all that gladdened our life on earth hath found a place, and all that vexed us here hath died in death. Here the wise learn wisdom, the holy, holiness, the perfect reach upward toward perfection. Here is the source and crown of all. Here is peace. Here is the fruition of hope.

May He who planted in the heart of man this divine hope make us worthy of its fulfilment.

CHARITY.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."—I. COR. xiii., 1.

WE have already considered two of the Christian graces. We have found faith indigenous to every soil, yet differing in each. We have found it in every age, tall and stately as the cedars, strong as the giant oak, braving the tempest of disaster, defying the torrent of despair, and year by year putting forth new branches and a more luxuriant foliage.

We have traced the course of hope like a graceful vine, clambering upward by the aid of faith to blossom in the skies. The last and loveliest of the sisters yet demands our attention. "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

The greatest of the three; yet, of the three, most neglected, most abused. We lean on the arm of Faith, we have loving words for Hope; but Charity, repulsed and stricken, weeps apart, a target for our scorn. Yet when Faith and Hope, like the priest and Levite of the parable, have both deserted us, Charity shall forget her wrongs, and come like the

good Samaritan to our aid, binding up our wounds, and pouring in oil and wine. Truly,

“In faith and hope the world will disagree,
But all mankind’s concern is charity.”

Suppose that, every morning, angel hands should lay upon the doorstep of each one a bust moulded in plastic clay, a bust modelled to the very perfection of human symmetry and beauty,—a perfect character shining through a perfect face; and suppose that, throughout the day, each thought and word of ours regarding every other should be imprinted by its proper expression upon that face. At close of day, when all were surrendered for inspection, from how many houses, think you, would that bust come forth unmarred? How many of us each night could report with truth, “To-day, I have passed no harsh judgment, I have spoken no uncharitable word, I have done nothing to impair the loveliness of this divine image”?

Alas, not one! I fear that in every case those angel features would be found transformed, and fiend-like in expression. I fear that no pest-house victim could have suffered worse defacement than the most fortunate of these. Yet every distortion upon that face would be a branded lie, for in our uncharitable judgment of others we never judge truly.

That bust of plastic clay is hardly an idle fancy, for on the soul of each is recorded the daily life of each. The dart we fling at our neighbor returns,

like the *boomerang* of the Australian, to wound us. The mire we cast on another defiles our own hands. These scars and defacements of the soul, wrought by our own malice, help to make up the record of our life. Each hour, each day, each month, each year, adds to that record; and at last, bearing with us this marred and tortured travesty of self, marred and tortured by our own merciless attacks upon others, how shall we stand before the bar of God and ask for mercy at his hands? How many among us would dare to commence each day with Alexander Pope's "Universal Prayer"? —

"Teach me to feel another's woe,
To hide the guilt I see;
The mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to me."

The sin of uncharitableness is the crying evil of our time. Not one of us is guiltless. We live in glass houses, yet constantly throw stones; and the more fragile our tenement, the more fiercely we assail the rest. The woman who lightly impugns the fair fame of a neighbor is not pure at heart. The man who believes all others dishonest needs to be well watched.

"Who vows no honest people live,
At least proclaims himself a knave."

It is not generally known that, in law, the man or woman who repeats a slander is liable equally with the original inventor thereof; that belief in its truth is no defence; that, even should it be proven

true, this will not relieve the promulgator from responsibility. By listening to a slanderous tale, we dishonor ourselves, and do a mean act. By repeating it, we commit a criminal one, and are liable to punishment.

But, if on earth there crawls one creature more contemptible than another, it is the silent slanderer. It is he who tries to avoid the liability of words, but, by meaning looks or a shrug of the shoulders, seeks to convey a slanderous impression. The fair fame of many a spotless woman has been thus ruined, and her life blasted, by some worthless coward who dared not speak what he implied. I never meet such a one but I wish, with the wife of Iago, that Heaven would

“Put in every honest hand a whip,
To lash the rascals naked through the world.”

We all like news, and it requires considerable self-denial to refuse to listen to what is offered. Yet, if we have the true spirit, we would afterward give much not to have heard the slanderous tale. Where all was before well, we have now received unpleasant impressions regarding three parties, namely : —

First, as to the object of the attack ; for, however much we may strive to efface the impression from our mind, however much we may disbelieve the story, its shadow remains, and, like Banquo's ghost, refuses to be laid.

Second, as to ourself. We feel that we have done

wrong in listening. We have thereby lowered ourselves in our own estimation. We have done a mean thing, and we have encouraged another to commit a crime against good morals and common law. We have suffered a loss in self-respect, and the sense of this injury to the finer portion of our nature intensifies.

Third, our contempt for the scandal-monger who brought us the news; for, though we may disguise our feelings through policy or courtesy, there is but one coin current in payment for scandal, and that is *contempt*. The veriest gossips that ever exchanged calumnies over their cups of tea, or their pipes of tobacco, have at heart only contempt each for the other, and will slander each other with equal good will when occasion offers. The scandal-monger knows not friendship. All are good fish that come to his net. He offers his wares to whoever will buy, sells and resells his purchasers, and is sold and resold in turn. I have known people who dared not leave a social circle until the final breaking-up, knowing well that, so soon as their backs were turned, their late cronies would tear their characters to tatters.

But Charity suffers most through thoughtless gossip,—when neighbor calls on neighbor, at tea-gatherings, at sewing-circles, at market, on the street corner; wherever friend meets with friend to exchange news. Then words fly swiftly, like weavers' shuttles, and the shroud of Charity is woven. Then the name of some absent acquaintance is

bandied from mouth to mouth. Then molehills rise to the altitude of mountains, and thoughtless indiscretions, which the mantle of Charity should hide utterly, are magnified to heinous crimes.

There is but one sure antidote for the poison of slander, and that is a blameless life.

Should envy seek to mar thy fame,
Live it down ;
Should malice blacken thy good name,
Live it down ;
Should all the hosts of hell unite
To whelm thee 'neath their vengeful spite,
And paint thee with the hues of night,
Live it down, live it down.

Though lost to thee be every friend,
Live it down ;
The truth will conquer in the end,
Live it down ;
As morning comes, though night be long,
As calm succeeds the tempest strong,
So right shall triumph over wrong,
Live it down, live it down.

We are each conscious that, in the main, we desire to do right. Our slips and backslidings are the result rather of weakness than of evil intent. Like Paul, we see a law in our members warring against the law of our minds, and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin. When we would do good, evil is present with us.

Being thus conscious of our own integrity of purpose, why should we not be willing to accord the same integrity to others? The fact is that nearly

every one wishes to do right. Our wrong-doings are but excrescences and fungi upon the surface of our lives, and properly no part thereof. They are unsightly eruptions, come through hereditary taint, our unholy heritage from an impure ancestry; and from these the fountain of life shall yet be purified.

What, then, is the remedy for that uncharitableness which to-day pervades and renders insecure every branch of society?

It has been aptly said that, "if each would reform himself, the whole world would be reformed." This, then, must be the remedy. Let us, each and all, this day unite in a solemn pledge before God that, in thought and word and act, we will henceforth extend to all others that kindly and charitable judgment which we would ourselves wish to receive at the hands of others. Each morning let us renew our resolution and pledge that, for this day, we will not think an unkind thought or speak an unkind word of any living soul. Let the prayer of the psalmist be our prayer continually: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."

In this connection, I would commend to your attention the three rules of conversation concerning the absent which Martin Luther kept constantly on his table. I will ask you to remember them; to write them down; to hang them prominently in your sitting-room, where your eyes and the eyes of all your visitors will naturally rest upon them. Then I will ask you, whenever you speak of the absent, to try every statement by these three rules:

First, is it true? Second, is it kind? Third, is it necessary? Tried by these three standards, how much idle and hurtful gossip would be cut off! If, when about to speak of the absent, we should pause long enough to apply these three tests to the proposed remark, should we not very frequently change the subject, and leave the word unsaid?

My friends, I have asked your attention to this subject because, to be frank with you, I have reason to believe that the word is needed. I have told you no new thing, for there is nothing new to say. But, as one who every day feels the need of charitable judgment, speaking to men and women equally in constant need thereof, I ask you to join with me in a solemn resolve that, henceforth, we will try to be more charitable in our judgment of others, more careful in what we say of the absent, more unwilling to listen to or believe evil reports of our acquaintance, more anxious to hide faults than to magnify them. Remembering alway that, "though *we* speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, *we* are become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

JESUS AND THE FALLEN WOMAN.

“He that is without sin among you.”—JOHN viii., 7.

I ASK you to consider with me that beautiful story of Jesus and the fallen woman, as told in the eighth chapter of the Gospel of John.

The time is early morning. The place, the interior of the great temple at Jerusalem. Jesus is seated teaching the people, who throng in crowds to hear him.

Presently, his discourse is interrupted by the noise of a commotion in the street outside. Now it has reached the doorway. Now a band of his avowed enemies, Scribes and Pharisees, enter, bringing with them a woman taken in sin.

With dishevelled hair, and eyes streaming tears; pale, shrinking, conscience-stricken; having naught to extenuate, having none to advocate; knowing the penalty, and hopeless of mercy,—she is dragged along by her savage captors.

With knitted brows, eyes gleaming with fanatic hate, cruel lips which seem to thirst for blood, fingers clenched on the stones ready to throw, and muscles strained for the cruel exercise, these hale her into the temple, bring her before Jesus, and set her in the midst.

Why have they come? Is it that He — “who spake as never man spake” — may consider the cause, interpret the law, pronounce the sentence, or remit it?

No: their motive is more sinister by far than this. They have one victim; they seek for another. If, through excess of sympathy, this gentle teacher may be entrapped into heretical interpretation of the law; if, through all-abounding love, he drop one word which may be distorted into a palliation of the crime, — then, perchance, they may bring him also to judgment, accomplish his ruin, it may be even consummate his death.

Ay, and the ferocity of the tiger is here linked to the cunning of the fox. Note their hypocritical advance, and mark the craftily worded question with which they seek to insnare him: —

“Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?”

Well know they the tenderness of that loyal heart; loyal to God and humanity, though not perhaps to the strict letter of the Mosaic law. But their craft is vain: he has fathomed their design; and, as though he heard them not, he turns away, and with his finger writes upon the ground. Baffled, yet persistent, again and again they importune him, until at last the startling answer comes, thrilling each bosom with a sense of guilt, and flushing every brow with shame: “*He that is without sin among*

you, let *him first* cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground." He turns from them.

What does he mean? "He that is without *sin* among you"? Abashed to silence at the word, self-accused and self-convicted, they slink away. What was there in these simple words of Jesus to thus disconcert his enemies? What is *sin*?

Come with me under the groined arches of a great cathedral, when Mozart's Mass is sung. Commenced by the white-robed priests at the chancel, the chant is caught up and continued by the trained choir at the further end. Now descending to the congregation, now back to the chancel, the waves of melody ebb and flow and surge, in perfect rhythm, like the waves of a mighty ocean pent within walls.

Closing the eyes, we could almost fancy we have passed from earth, and stand on the threshold of heaven, listening to the choirs of the redeemed. But, hark! Suddenly, a voice strikes in upon that marvellous measure, wild, harsh, discordant; now far above, now far below, and ever out of tune. The effect is spoiled, the dream is dispelled. With a sigh, we return again to earth. So the divine harmonies pulsate to the outmost circles of infinity, flowing in melodious waves from the central heart of God; and *sin* is that one discordant voice that sings forever out of tune.

To whom, then, did Jesus speak? To the Scribes and Pharisees only? No: he spoke to us also. He speaks to us to-day. No, not to your neighbor,

but to yourself. That still small voice of conscience in your heart is his voice, applying to your life this test: "He that is without sin among you."

And what is your answer? Do you say that you are sinless? "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Do you say that your sins are but trivial? No sin is trivial. If thy voice vary ever so little from the divine harmony, yet is it discord, and mars the glorious effect.

What is your sin? Is it pride? Are you puffed up with a sense of your importance, of your ability, of your acquirements, of your merits, of your possessions,—forgetting that "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble"? Shall we not value these things? Yes; but let our valuation be ever tempered with humility, which is the very first letter in the alphabet of Christianity.

Is it greed? Do you at times forget that "he that hasteth to be rich falleth into a snare"? Shall we not seek wealth? Yes; but let us seek it conscientiously, and with moderation, defrauding no one. Let us seek it as the means to noble ends, but never as the end. To count wealth the aim and measure of life were as sensible as to devote that wealth to the purchase of powerful machinery, then allow this to rust in useless inactivity. Wealth is the machinery to the accomplishment of many worthy ends; but it can never, in itself, be the fitting object of human life and endeavor.

Is thy sin secret? Doth no one know it save

thyself only? Though thou bury it in the bowels of earth, though thou sink it in the nethermost deeps of ocean, though thou disperse it to the four winds of heaven, yet, like the ghastly corpse which Eugene Aram strove to hide, and could not, it shall be raised to the light of day. The earth and the ocean shall refuse it, the winds of heaven shall return it. That which is told to the ear in secret shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops. Be sure your sin will find you out.

Do you realize the importance of this matter? Are you awaked to the discord of your life, and would you fain attune it to the divine harmonies? Does a sense of guilt overwhelm you, and do you cry out with Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" It is a vital question. Who shall deliver you? How shall you be delivered? Shall it be by sacrifice? No: the Almighty delighteth not in burnt offering. Shall it be by sacrifice? Yes: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Shall it, then, be by sacrifice? Yes: a sacrifice is demanded of thee, that thou lay thy sin upon the altar.

And what further? That thou follow Christ. How shall I follow Christ? Consecrate the inner sanctuary of your heart a temple to the living God, and keep it constantly swept clean of every evil thought. Erect therein your highest, holiest, noblest ideal of manhood or womanhood, and let this stand for your Christ. Then, with all your strength,

strive ever to bring your daily life up to the plane of this your ideal life; and, as you progress spiritually, constantly exalt your ideal, remembering that goodness is limitless, and progress infinite. Tread firmly under foot every hindrance to your upward march, and remember alway that, as Jesus was the child of man, and spent his life in the service of man, so, in serving man, you follow him, and thus serve God, whose servant he was.

Herein lies the sublimest beauty of the lesson of Jesus' life,—that man must be redeemed by man; and, in the redemption of others, our own redemption is attained. Not, therefore, by the death of Christ are ye saved, but by his life; not by the blood of God are ye regenerate, but by striving to do his will.

But, remember, thy tears of to-day will not avail thee, if to-morrow thou dally with thy sin. The law is inexorable. If thou art vacillating, back-sliding, and relapse into sin; if thou take again to thy bosom that thou hast rejected, and again commit that that thou hast been pardoned,—so surely as night follows day, and effect treads upon the heels of cause, so surely the unswerving laws of God shall sooner or later overtake thee, and punishment repay thy crime.

Do you plead weakness, your inability to resist temptation? We are all more weak than wicked, yet are we not so weak as we would fain make ourselves believe. How, then, shall I conquer in this spiritual conflict? In precisely the same manner

that you conquer other difficulties: by summoning your manhood, by asserting your independence, by refusing longer to be a slave to your slaves,—your passions and baser impulses.

Shall I pray? Yes: pray without ceasing. Wrestle with God in prayer. Not that he will change one of his laws an iota in consequence of your petition, but because prayer is the calisthenics of the soul, and through this spiritual exercise you are spiritually strengthened to act for yourself. God helps those only who help themselves.

Turning again to the narrative, we read: "And Jesus was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the midst." What a picture is here! The antagonistic forces of good and evil, the two poles of purity and corruption, have met. Here is the culprit, pale, trembling conscience-stricken, weighed down by a sense of guilt made doubly hideous through contact with that pure presence. There is the Judge, gentle, loving, merciful; the benignity of his countenance transfiguring all about him, calming, quieting, and comforting even that poor Magdalen. It is the crisis of a life. A human soul trembles in the balance. One word may exalt it to heaven, one word may debase it to hell. He looks up, he turns toward her, and gently questions her: "Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?" "No man, Lord," she answers.

Like the slumberous roll of funeral drums, burying the dead sin out of sight forever; like the rapturous

swell of heavenly anthems, welcoming the redeemed one into glory, the gracious message of God's mercy comes through the sweet lips of that gentle messenger, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

LITTLE THINGS.

"If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?"—II. KINGS v., 13.

LIKE Naaman the Syrian, we are all apt to think more highly of great deeds than of the small things of life; yet this is a life of little moments and of small events. I remember once reading the story of two boys, to each of whom, on the evening preceding a holiday, their father presented a gold dollar. To the one, being of an imaginative turn of mind, here was wealth inexhaustible; and he spent a sleepless night planning its expenditure. But when day dawned, and he found that neither horses, carriages, nor brown stone mansions could be procured therewith, he gradually laid out the whole in sweetmeats, and soon made himself ill by a surfeit. The other, of a more practical turn, by skilful trading in such small wares as his limited capital would purchase, laid the foundation of a handsome fortune.

And wherein does this experience of a child differ from the experience of a mature life? The difference is, I think, but very slight. The experiences are fairly parallel. For, to the youth, life is an exhaustless treasure. Even a year is wealth

untold. Days, hours, and minutes are small change of little value, to be scattered broadcast, without reducing the principal.

“When first youth counts the glittering links
That Time around us binds so fast,
Pleased with the task, he little thinks
How hard that chain will press at last.
When first our scanty years are told,
It seems like pastime to grow old.”

But, having squandered the first quarter of our life's gold dollar in sweetmeats, how quickly the second flies! Before we realize it, we have reached the meridian, and are on the decline. As our store of years grows less, the sand seems to run faster from the glass. Time, whom we took to be a tortoise, proves himself a race-horse. We have been wont to urge him with goads, now we would fain delay him with drags. But all is useless: he is on the home stretch; he has the bit in his teeth, and we are whirled onward with lightning rapidity toward the goal. But, though we cannot stay his course, we may yet, in a measure, direct it; and well is it for us if, unblinded by the dust of the track, we have kept ever in view that bright star of hope which marks the outlet.

Youth is always self-complacent. Who ever knew a boy to doubt his capacity for success? Manhood, through familiarity with self, grows self-critical and self-distrustful. He is conscious of good resolutions, of noble impulses; but he is doubly conscious of inadequate powers of execution.

“ At thirty, man suspects himself a fool;
Knows it at forty, and reforms his plans;
At fifty, chides his infamous delay,
Resolves, and re-resolves; then dies the same.”

Yet, with all its baseness, all its littleness, all its vanity, life is neither wholly ignoble nor wholly vain. It is great, it is grand, it is noble; and the lives of men and women in every portion of our world are daily proving its nobility. Of this I am persuaded,—that a grand moral purpose pervades nature, and has its highest manifestation in the life of man. This moral purpose, this uplifting power, we say, is the spiritual manifestation of God. He is the all-pervading, the all-enfolding. He lives in us, and we in him. He is the infinite circle that embraces man and the worm. He is the infinite life that penetrates both. As Pope expresses it,—

“ All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body Nature is, and God the soul.”

But this consciousness of a great moral impulse, pervading and uplifting us in common with all nature, fluctuates with our moods. It is as a spark of fire, now fanned into a ruddy glow of generous flame, now dwindling and dying out for want of proper nourishment. To-day, our faith is bright, we have trust in God and hope for the future, and all is well. To-morrow, all looks dark, and we are on the borders of despair. Why is this? If we trust in God to-day, why cannot we trust him alway? If, to-day, our hope of immortality is fervent, why should it be dull

to-morrow? Why is it that our minds fluctuate between a spiritual zenith and nadir? Why is it that sometimes life seems so bright and joyous, fringed with a golden hope; at others, a pall covers the landscape?

Such morbid and gloomy conditions of mind as the latter are, I think, usually traceable to one of two causes,—physical ailment or moral defection. The natural attitude of the healthy man or woman is contentment here, hope for the hereafter. But physical derangement produces gloom, and gloom breeds despair. So moral derangement has a like effect. When the evil within us gains the upper hand, we lose faith in good and in God. That rapture of aspiration which scales the bastions of heaven, and communes with things divine, must be born of a pure life. I remember a monk of St. Bernard, whose face, during devotion, seemed transfigured, as the face of one who sees a vision. And I firmly believe that, by constantly treading under foot the base, and constantly striving after the ideal, even in this life it is given unto some to see faint glimmerings of the morrow's dawn. I believe that such a one was Jesus. By constantly striving after things divine, he learned to walk with God even while on earth; and we might learn to do likewise, if we would.

Yet, for the vast mass of humanity, no such glimmerings come; for we have not faith, we cannot see beyond our horizon. But to-day is with us, bright and joyous, to use to the best advantage; and we

have the grand hope of to-morrow to cheer to-day's decline. Let us thank God for that hope; but, because of it, let us not undervalue the life that now is. There has been too much of this in the past, but a better sentiment is prevailing. When we decry life as worthless, and say we are ready and willing to go at any moment, we make a grave mistake, and utter a falsehood which no one believes. We go because we are obliged to go, not because we want to; and, were it otherwise, we should be false to the strongest instinct of our human nature and of all sentient life,—the desire to live.

“'Tis life of which our nerves are scant,
O life, not death for which we pant;
More life, and fuller, that I want.”

And it is well that it is so. Like cattle loose in a field, could we see the contents of the next enclosure, and were we under no form of restraint, might we not be constantly tempted to break in, and thus subvert law? Under present conditions, we see only the field we frequent; and, while the pasture may be poor and the water scarce, we will do well to make the best of it, and be thankful, hoping always for something better in the future; for hope is our privilege. Hope is the guiding star of human destiny. Hope has made our race what it is to-day, and we follow hope on our upward course.

Our great concern at present is with this life, not with the next. To-morrow is not ours until it comes, but to-day is ours in hand. Let us live this

life well, and the next will take care of itself. The vital question now needing an answer is, How shall I live this life up to its highest possibilities? How shall I subdue sin, crucify my lower nature, and increase in holiness and purity? How shall I help my fellow-man, and make the sum of human misery less? These questions are of far more importance than all our idle gossip concerning heaven: Where is it? What is it like? What shall we do there? How shall we be dressed? Such questions are the merest vanity of speculation. We cannot know, for it is hid from us, doubtless for a wise purpose: even as earthly parents refuse to answer the multitudinous questions of their children, and have good reason for their silence. But, despite that silence, the star of a universal hope broods above the portal of death, and assures us of a life beyond. It assures us that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Shall we waste this life in querulous complainings because the beyond lies wrapped in shadow? Surely not. Rather let us, with thankful hearts, in the light of that glorious hope, strive to live this life well. The problem which life daily and hourly offers to each one of us is this, How shall I live the present moment up to its highest and noblest possibilities?

The present moment is all we have; and, if we constantly expend this nobly, our whole life will be noble. What constitutes a noble life? Is it the

doing of great deeds? I think not. Rather is it in doing the humble duties of life, which, moment by moment, hour by hour, day by day, present themselves. Great things are not required of us. The servant in the kitchen may live life quite as truly, quite as nobly, as the mistress in the parlor.

Length of life is not the true measure of life : —

“ We should count time by heart-throbs,
Not by years.”

He who falls early may yet have lived a long life. For an example of this, consider the life of Jesus. He died at about thirty-five, or at most forty, and his public career did not probably exceed a year and a half ; yet how great has been his influence ! But, as I read the record, that influence was not attained through the doing of great deeds or mighty works. He led no armies to victory. He was neither king nor statesman. In a little country district, among country people, he taught practical godliness by precept, but still more by practice. He performed the little duties of a seemingly limited destiny well, and trusted God for the rest. His last cry was a wail of despair, wrung from human weakness ; and he died in ignorance of what he had really accomplished. So must we work, so must we die,—in ignorance of our life’s result ; “but God giveth the increase.”

This, then, is the lesson taught by our text,—to use the present moment wisely ; to do the little things of life well ; to do our duty in that station of

life wherein we find ourselves, and trust God for the rest. There is one sure panacea for despair, and that is duty. No human being ever despaired while doing his whole duty. While we grieve for the friends who have fallen, let us not forget to close the ranks. They have left us a noble example: let us not forget to profit thereby. Their souls are with God, but their work remains with us. And that work is not some great thing, but the little duties of life, which fill the little moments of life's little day.

PRAYER.

"If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands toward him."—JOB xi., 13.

A LADY asked me recently: "Why should I pray? Shall I go out at noonday and ask the sun to shine?"

I told her: "No. If that is your understanding of the spirit of prayer, refrain. By asking God for temporal blessings which you already have, you commit an act of folly. By asking God for temporal blessings which you have not, you waste your breath. The experience of the ages proves that special providence is a myth. I defy the world to show me, in the whole range of history, a single well-authenticated case of temporal advantage gained by prayer. If you are sick only in imagination, a religious quack may work upon your imagination and pronounce you well. But not all the prayers of all the faithful could set a broken limb or restore a lost finger. The laws of nature are the laws of God, and nature is ever consistent. She works by means."

But is mendicancy prayer? Is the true attitude of prayer that of a beggar, with extended palm, seeking by importunity and cajolery to secure an alms?

I think not. Was this what Jesus meant when he said, "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive"? I do not believe that he so meant. Did he not, rather, exhibit his true meaning when he said to his disciples: "And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have received their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee." But, if God does not grant our prayers, how shall we attain to the promised recompense?

In order to answer this question satisfactorily, we must first decide,—what is prayer?

I have already said that prayer is not the asking for temporal blessings. Prayer, in my understanding, is not so much the asking for anything as it is communion with God. It is the aspiration of man toward the Divine. It is the reaching out, feeling for, and taking hold of God's hand in the darkness. It is the clinging of a weak nature to a stronger, as the ivy clings to the oak. It is the feeling of dependence in its best sense,—the dependence of love: the dependence of a child on its father, of a wife on her husband. It is self-surrender without loss of individuality. It is marriage spiritualized,—a spiritual union without merger. It is the conception of the absolute harmony to which a discordant note is

attuned. It is the bringing into accord a part with the whole. The key-note of all prayer is contained in these words,—“Thy will be done.” This is my understanding of the spirit of prayer. This is prayer.

Does this view tend to weaken our faith in the paternal providence of God? It does not. Rather, it tends to strengthen it. So infinite is his love, so admirably adjusted his law, that the humblest and the highest in the vast scale of being are equally provided for. We are no longer waifs drifting down the stream of Time, the sport of wanton winds and chance waves, our salvation or condemnation depending on the power of our lungs to reach the divine ear, the persuasive quality of our eloquence to move the divine heart. We are not such, I say. But rather are we ships, stanch and true, fashioned by the hand of the Great Builder, stored and furnished by his careful love, and guided by his hand. So long as we respond to the helm, all is well. 'Tis only when rebellious or heedless that we are caught by the whirling eddies, that the rude rocks tear us with their teeth.

It follows, therefore, that prayer does not necessarily imply speech. It is related of a well-known authoress, a woman of intensely religious feeling, that she never prayed in words. When the spirit of prayer came upon her, she wandered forth into the woods, and communed with the birds and flowers; or, at night, she stood with uncovered head beneath the majestic dome of heaven, and marked a myriad worlds careering throughout infinite space,

each in his appointed orbit, and listened with ear attuned to catch the music of the spheres, to hearken to that still, small voice which whispers the message of divine love unto the human soul, and says to the waves of passion, "Peace, be still!" Who shall say that her prayers without words were not as eloquent as those that fell from the honeyed lips of an Ambrose? For there is an eloquence in silence to which all sound is a mockery. Do not the eyes of love rehearse their message, though lips be sealed? What is more eloquent than a hand-clasp? Does not the simple presence of a loved one exert a charm, an influence on our consciousness? Even with the lost to earth we hold communion in memory; and our friend, though dead, yet speaketh unto us, and whispers, "All is well!" So, to my mind, the truest, the most eloquent prayer not always finds expression in words. It is as the fragrance of the flowers,—unseen, unheard, floating upward into and pervading space. So the silent prayer, wafted upward from the soul, meets and mingles with the eternal silences of God.

I care not what his religious belief or unbelief,—every man who has penetrated beneath the surface of life must admit the reality of prayer and the influence of divine communion upon the human soul. If this be not so, how shall we explain the wondrous mystery of forgiveness? Do you deny the reality of forgiveness? Then I ask, Were you never self-convicted of sin? Has conscience never held up the mirror to nature, and revealed your boasted robe

of purity as vile and filthy rags? If this chapter of your experience is yet unread, I envy not your condition.

“I envy not the beast that takes
His license in the fields of Time;
Unfettered by the sense of crime,
In whom a conscience never wakes.”

But if I speak to one who has had this experience; who, made conscious of sin and unworthiness, and weighed upon by a sense of guilt, in the secrecy of his chamber has wrestled with God, even as Jacob wrestled with the angel; who, like the publican, scarce daring to lift up his eyes to heaven, smote upon his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me a sinner,”—if there be such a one here, I ask him, as Jacob attained the blessing he strove for, as the publican was justified, as the burden of Pilgrim fell from his shoulders as he stood before the cross, Did you not attain to the sense of sins forgiven? We know not how the message comes. No sound breaks the silence, no signal greets the sight; yet the message comes, “Go in peace: thy sins are forgiven thee.” Yes, prayer is real and forgiveness is real; yet both are intangible. The one is an aspiration, the other an answering thought.

I remember reading of a Catholic who, at confession, admitted that he had stolen a quantity of hay, and desired absolution for the theft; but requested that this might cover also two remaining loads, which he was going to bring that evening.

Many persons say their prayers to God very much in the spirit that this man made his confession to the priest. They approach God with their lips, but their hearts are far from him. They go through a form of words, and ask to be delivered from evil, while in thought they are planning some new sin. They profess to believe in an omniscient and omnipotent power; but they act as though their divinity was a blind and helpless idol, to be duped and made a fool of at will. Such are to be found in every denomination of religious faith; yet they are practical atheists. Their prayers are wind. If I ask God to deliver me from evil, then straightway walk into temptation, that prayer will not be answered; for I have proved that I did not mean it, and it was not a prayer. God helps those only who help themselves. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

We approach most nearly to God in our contemplation of nature. Bryant, while yet a boy, realized this, and wrote "Thanatopsis": —

"To him who in the love of Nature holds
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
A various language. For his gayer hours
She hath a voice of gladness, and a smile,
And eloquence of beauty; and she glides
Into his darker musings with a mild
And healing sympathy, that steals away
Their sharpness ere he is aware."

And an English poet has given us this beautiful picture from nature: —

"Your voiceless lips, O flowers, are living preachers,
Each cup a pulpit, every leaf a book,
Supplying to my fancy numerous teachers
From loneliest nook.

"'Neath cloistered boughs, each floral bell that swingeth,
And tolls its perfume on the passing air,
Makes Sabbath in the fields, and ever ringeth
A call to prayer.

"Not to the domes where crumbling arch and column
Attest the feebleness of mortal hand,
But to that fane most catholic and solemn
Which God hath planned;

"To that cathedral, boundless as our wonder,
Whose quenchless lamps the sun and moon supply;
Its choir, the winds and waves; its organ, thunder;
Its dome, the sky,—

"There, amid solitude and shade, I wander
Through the green aisles, and, stretched upon the sod,
Awed by the silence, reverently ponder
The ways of God."

I turn now to the reverse side of my subject,—
Pharisaic prayer, the prayer of those whom Jesus
condemned, who "love to stand and pray in the
synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that
they may be seen of men." And he says of such,
"Verily I say unto you, they have received their
reward." What reward have they received? The
empty reward of being seen of men, of being cred-

ited with a piety to which they have no just claim. This is their reward, and all the reward they get; for God answers only the prayer of the heart, and no amount of empty form may win the divine blessing. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Far be it from me to challenge any man's sincerity, or to judge any. To his own Master he must stand or fall; and how shall I hope for charity, if I exercise it not? Yet there are certain prayers not unusual in the present day, which to my mind come within the condemnation of Jesus; and, as illustrations of this whole class of prayers, I would enumerate three only:—

First, where a minister, or other leader of devotion, public or private, gives way to a common temptation of the pulpit, and formulates an elaborate petition, not in the fervent spirit of devout communion with God, or a desire to lift the souls of his hearers to higher planes of thought, but merely for literary effect, and that members of the congregation may say one to the other, "What a beautiful prayer that was: how eloquent, how touching!" He has received his reward in the applause of men; but I believe that, before God, he has failed utterly. Prayer is a spontaneous outpouring of the soul to God; and, when it ceases to be that, I care not how eloquent the forced utterance, how nicely turned the sentences, it is no longer prayer. So much have I been impressed with this thought while sit-

ting under some long and wordy petitions, that I have frequently questioned whether we might not with advantage substitute the Quaker method of silent prayer in Unitarian worship.

Second, it is the custom of some persons to indulge in stated periods of private devotion, night and morning, on retiring and on rising. The custom is an old and honored one; and we, many of us, have pleasant memories of childhood's simple prayers learned at the mother's knee. But others, again, do not care to follow this custom, believing perhaps that seasons of prayer should not be forced; that only when the inspiration of prayer is felt should that communion with the Divine be sought; that the whole life should be one continued prayer of faith and psalm of praise. Here are two classes of people, equally religious, equally honest, and in my opinion equally right, since each does what seems to him the best.

Now let us suppose that the man who does not believe in stated periods of prayer has occasion to visit the man who does. When, on retiring for the night, his host kneels down to say his customary prayer, shall the guest do likewise? You will say that, in courtesy, he is bound to do so; and yet, if he does it from that motive only, he but prays to be seen of men. To my mind, prayer is too sacred a thing to be thus trifled with. I lay down no rule for such a case, unless it be this, and this I emphasize: Be true to yourself and your own convictions, and follow the dictates of conscience, however you

may appear to others. If you do this, you cannot make a mistake.

Third, the practice of asking a blessing at meals is now almost entirely obsolete in Unitarian families. Yet, if the minister comes, he is almost always asked to say grace. We frequently, therefore, witness this anomaly: A minister who does not say grace at his own table is requested to say grace at the table of a friend who does not say grace when the minister is not present. The minister knows that no blessing would be asked if he were not there, and that the form is gone through with simply and purely as a compliment to him. His host probably knows that the minister eats his meals daily at his own house without asking a formal blessing, yet, because it is the fashion to do so, requests his guest to say grace. Now, if this is not the daily custom of the household, why should an exception be made when a minister is at the table? If it is the daily custom of the household, every minister will gladly conform thereto. But let me not be understood as decrying the custom of asking a blessing before eating, when that is the daily custom of the household, and where the true and reverent spirit of prayer is the inciting cause thereto. Under such circumstances, I call the custom a good one. But, under the circumstances I first mentioned, both host and guest are placed in the false position of those who pray to be seen of men. And let me say in passing that, in my opinion, our best testimony of thankfulness to God is in receiving and enjoying in

a reasonable manner the good gifts which he has provided. No lengthy grace will atone for querulous discontent at what is provided. Still, I would again emphasize that my objection is only to empty forms to be seen of men, not to prayer.

But, turning from this ungrateful branch of my subject, I would have you consider the efficacy of prayer in hours of trial. Sorrow is the furnace, not of God's wrath, but of God's refining. "We are tried as silver is tried." We are melted by the flames, and beaten by the hammers; and, not knowing the intention of the Divine Workman, our faith too often fails. But, when the fire is the hottest, and the strokes fall heaviest, if we will but stretch out our hands unto God, we shall surely find him in the darkness. And, having found him, let us, as Jacob did, strive with him for the blessing; and this also will he grant to us.

The face of God is hid from us, and not in answer to prayer will his methods be disclosed; but the exercise of true and heartfelt prayer will never fail of a fitting recompense. Though the load may not be removed, the back will be strengthened to bear it. The infinite circle is so great that the limited portion we can dimly comprehend appears to our imperfect vision as a straight line. Yet is it none the less a circle, perfect and harmonious; and we rest in that divine harmony. The waves of our little lives break upon the surface, and we cry out in terror, "Lord, save! we perish!" But the fathomless deeps of God rest undisturbed, and the

serenity of an infinite peace is our security. Not to vex those infinite deeps to sympathy with our surface agitation is the office of prayer, but rather to calm our surface waves into sympathy with the great deeps; so shall we receive our recompense in that peace which passeth understanding.

THE ETHICS OF JESUS.

"As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."—LUKE vi., 31.

THE value of any individual life must be estimated by its influence upon the world's life. Has it advanced or retarded the mental, moral, and spiritual growth of the race? To this test must be brought the life of a Guiteau or a Garfield, of a Judas or a Jesus. To this test posterity will bring your life and mine, and by this we shall stand or fall.

Judged by this standard, the life of Jesus was fruitful beyond measure; for its impulse was the highest, its circle of influence the widest. In every line of human thought and action there must be a greatest,—a Napoleon in war, a Shakspeare in letters, an Ambrose in eloquence, a Jesus in religion. And, having found that representative mind in any line, surely we shall be well repaid to study his methods and results. Thus, I invite you to a consideration of the Ethics of Jesus,—the system of morality by him taught for the guidance of men. But I would have you come to this investigation in no spirit of blind acceptance. Jesus was a man like one of us; and, as such, his teachings are as open to criticism as are those of any other man. Some

of Shakspeare's passages we print in letters of gold, while others we ignore as unworthy. We admire the military genius of Napoleon, but we condemn his unscrupulous ambition. So the honest student finds much to admire and follow, but some things also to dissent from, in the teachings of Jesus ; much that is eminently sound, but part that is wholly impracticable. He finds, in fact, a human life of noble impulse fettered by human limitation ; a Titanic soul bound to the Caucasus of mortality, preyed upon by the vultures of passion, and crying aloud through the darkness, now in despair and now in hope.

Only in this view, the human view of the life of Jesus, can that life be understood. Only in this view can his teachings be understood, or be made applicable to our lives. Directly we assert his infallibility, we make worthless his example to fallible men ; but let us study him in the same spirit as we study other teachers, and his life shall yield us the richest harvest of the ages.

First, as to his central idea, the pivotal point upon which his system turned : this we find in his conception of the unity of God and the divine paternity. So rich and full was his spiritual nature that he unhesitatingly affirmed the divine kinship, saying to his disciples, "Ye are sons of God," and asserting, "I and my Father are one." Having thus, as it were, claimed an equality with the Divine for the sons of men, how high, how inspiring, how grand, how noble, was the standard of conduct he

set for them: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The arrow aimed at the sun will go further than that directed at a lower mark; and nothing short of divine perfection could satisfy the spiritual ambition of this the Elder Brother of our race. The mark he set was the highest possible in any age; for the standard of the divine perfection is necessarily relative to the standard of human perfection, the idea of God growing with the idea of man. How shall the same conception be expected from a savage and an Emerson? We do not expect it. Therefore, the spirit of Jesus' words is simply this: "Be ye perfect according to your highest ideal of the perfection of God."

He did not expect that all or any would attain to this. He emphatically denied his own perfection: "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God." And this must ever be an answer to those who claim that he was without sin. It is evident that he felt himself a sinner. Judged by his own standard, he was necessarily a sinner. It is admitted on all hands that he was tempted like as we are. But he told his disciples that he who looketh with the thought of sin hath committed the sin already in his heart; that the harboring of a wrong thought was the sin. The saying is tantamount to the Persian proverb, "The contemplation of vice is a vice." But in the wrong thought lies the temptation, for there can be none without it. Therefore, if Jesus was tempted,—and all admit that he was,—he must have had wrong thoughts, and thus,

judged by his own standard, was a sinner ; for into a mind of perfect holiness such thoughts would not enter. We may assume, therefore, that he resisted temptation, and, in the main, triumphed over sin ; but not that he was wholly sinless. The record shows him to have been pre-eminently a good man,—perhaps the best whose history has been written,—yet subject to human weakness and imperfection. I have said that there must always be a best ; and yet it were hard to say wherein many other lives of history have fallen short of the character of Jesus. His life has this tremendous advantage over all others,—that only a year, or at most a year and a half of it, is exposed to our inspection ; whereas, if we seek to compare another with him, we pick out all the follies of youth, and cast them into the scale. Thus, Augustine would compare favorably with Jesus throughout the latter half of his life, but the first half is stained with excesses. We know nothing of the first thirty years of Jesus' life ; and, when we cast our thought back to his time, and find him a simple country preacher, teaching practical morality to little groups of ragged peasants by the wayside (even as Emerson has taught in our own time), does it seem absolutely impossible that future generations might worship Emerson as a god, even as some now worship Jesus ? But those who knew Emerson intimately, while recognizing the beauty of his character, recognized also that he was but a weak and erring man ; that, while at times he was fairly inspired with the spirit of God, and spoke and

wrote divine truth, at others he was in bondage to the flesh, and committed sin and spoke error, and subsequently recognized them as such. It is said that in his latter years he listened discontentedly to quotations from his writings, and seemed dissatisfied with much that he had written. Suppose that Jesus had been suffered to grow old, would he, think you, in the maturity of age, have reaffirmed all the utterances of his youth? For my own part, I do not believe that he would. I do not believe that, if Jesus lived to-day, he would teach exactly as he taught then. The world has moved since his time. The thought of man has advanced. We see many things more clearly than he did; and, where our thought has progressed beyond his, we should not be limited by his thought. We should follow in his path toward the higher life, but, where we find he has stepped aside, we are not bound to walk in his tracks. It is the inspired thought and action of any leader that we should emulate, not his mistakes. Inspiration is of God, and only God is infallible. Who among those who contend for the infallibility of Jesus obey his example and injunction of perpetual poverty, or call it right to curse a barren tree, or to set the laws of the land at defiance? Do they not rather dwell on the Beatitudes, which breathe the eternal verities of God?

My argument therefore is that, in studying the teachings of Jesus, or those ascribed to him, we must do so, not servilely, but in the light of modern revelation. For there is a perpetual revelation, of

which we are the latest recipients. We are heirs of all that Jesus was heir to, and of much besides. We may not have come up to his perfection of spiritual growth, but in knowledge of material things we have certainly surpassed him. What we need now is to apply his spirituality to our increased knowledge of facts; to follow his high purpose in the light of modern science; not to chain ourselves to the letter, as slaves, but to follow the spirit, as free men. If we followed the letter, each one must sell all his possessions, and scatter the proceeds on the street, to be scrambled for by a vagrant crowd, who would spend the wealth thus obtained in rioting and drunkenness, while the former owners wandered about the country as pious mendicants. Such, I say, is the letter of Jesus' teaching, and perhaps to his day and to his audiences it was eminently applicable; but it is not so to ours. To-day, philanthropy gives wisely and sparingly, and wealth is recognized as a blessing to be sought rather than as a curse to be avoided. It is no longer true that riches bar the path to heaven; that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom." On the contrary, wealth is a great good, when rightly used.

But there are some truths that are never outgrown. These are the eternal verities of God. We know them instinctively as far as we can see them. Jesus did not create them: he simply recoined the gold of the centuries, and passed it on. The gold came from a higher source: it was co-eternal with

God, and was the gift of God to men. Such are the Beatitudes contained in the so-called Sermon on the Mount, which is not a sermon, but simply a collection of disjointed, epigrammatic utterances alleged to have fallen at different times from the lips of Jesus, and to have been cast into this shape for preservation. But the question is not as to their form of utterance, not even as to their authorship; but, Are they true? Are they adapted to human needs? Are they fit rules to live and die by? A diamond is none the less a diamond, though found in the gutter; a bit of glass is none the more valuable, though placed in a king's coronet. So the sayings of Judas or Jesus, of Guiteau or Garfield, of Ingersoll or Emerson, live or die by inherent merit or demerit, not because of their authorship. We may love the man, but dissent from his philosophy; we may execrate him, yet treasure his words. Lord Bacon has been called "the meanest of mankind," yet we read his works with reverence. Swift was an unprincipled wretch, false as the archfiend in his daily life; yet he wrote wisdom which we accept as such. The gold of God passes ever through unclean hands, yet the gold remains pure. The stamp of God's truth is indelible, it can never be effaced. But the converse of this proposition is equally true: the counterfeit is still a counterfeit, though paid by angel hands.

It is in this spirit, the spirit of rational discrimination, that I would have you study the words of Jesus; not as an infallible guide, for there is no infallible guide. The nearest we have to it is the

voice within, the voice of conscience, the still, small voice of God. This is an inherent instinct, divinely implanted, unerring, if unperturbed. This is the true standard of right and wrong to us. The words of Jesus, of Paul, of Emerson, of any great mind imbued with a high moral purpose, are to be received by us with reverence, considered with honesty, tested by conscience, and assimilated or rejected, as conscience allows or disallows. Conscience is the only court of final resort, the only viceroy of God on earth.

There is much that is obscure and ambiguous in the system of ethics Jesus taught; but the prevailing principle is evident, and that is love. His normal condition was one of infinite tenderness and intense humanity, which folded all men to his bosom. Only under the influence of passion did he forget his own precept,—“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, . . . pray for them which despitefully use you”; and his failure to always fulfil the thought does not detract from the majesty thereof. Never yet lived a preacher who always practised what he preached; but pure water cools parched lips, though offered in a broken vessel. Though in human weakness Jesus cursed his enemies, in divine strength he told us to love ours. This was his ideal of love. Let our own shortcomings teach us charity for his.

He taught absolute non-resistance: “To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and from him that taketh away thy cloke withhold not thy coat also.”

Common sense tells us that this is a false philosophy, and wholly impracticable. Following this, there would have been no Revolution, and this vast country must still be a petty appendage to England, ourselves and our children perpetual slaves to hereditary monarchy. Following this, our Union must have been dismembered in the late Rebellion, and left a helpless prey to lawless violence. Shall we stultify common sense, and say that he did not mean what his words implied? This has been the hackneyed argument of the Church for centuries; but it carries no weight. His meaning is obvious. Let us grant his honesty of purpose, but fairly meet the issue, and, with equal honesty, say boldly, Here he erred in judgment, and his philosophy is false. The instinct of self-preservation is the fundamental law of nature. It thrills all sentient life, and is implanted by the hand of God. He who transgresses that law in my person does so at his peril. Let Fort Sumter be again fired upon, and our cannon-shell again repay the insult. The doctrine of non-resistance is false in theory and absurd in practice. It would give our cities to the flames and ourselves to chains. It is the very excess of pusillanimity, born of a morbid habit, and as such worthy only of contempt. This is the counterfeit coin which has crept in among the true gold, and none the less is it counterfeit because offered by Jesus' hand. False it is, and false we are if we reject it not; and doubly false are we if, while rejecting it, we affirm its truth.

But the fact that one coin is proven counterfeit, or short in weight, does not impeach the rest. It simply puts us on inquiry. It warns us that we must weigh all, judge all. This is the exception that proves the rule. This is the touch of imperfect human nature which proves this man's humanity and keeps his feet on earth. Were it not for such slips of judgment, such imperfections of character, such inconsistencies of behavior, we should never dare to call him brother. But, when we realize that he was fallible as ourselves, was tempted as we are, and sinned and repented as we do, we can clasp hands with him as an equal and friend; we can walk with him and talk with him as with a brother; we can profit equally by his successes and mistakes, emulating the one and avoiding the other.

In some remote portions of Russia, it is said that the inhabitants are so ignorant as to believe that the Czar is a demi-god; and, as such, they worship him and pay sacrifices to him. But, if they knew the facts as they really are, far from being a demi-god, he is a man like one of them,—eating, drinking, and digesting his food as they do, and subject to all their frailties and imperfections.

So, if we could be translated through nineteen hundred years into the land of Palestine, we would find Jesus — instead of a demi-god with supernatural powers, infallible in thought and word and act, as imaginative historians have painted him — a simple country preacher, with little learning, and a small following, teaching practical morality to little groups

of ragged peasants by the wayside ; not claiming to be anything more than he was, a sinner speaking to sinners ; a man conscious of human weakness and imperfection, painting to other men, also weak and imperfect, his grand ideal of a divine perfection. Preaching to-day, sinning to-morrow, repenting and taking a fresh start, we would each find his life a parallel to our own. And, when we have once realized this, we realize also that the teachings of Jesus are as open to criticism as are those of any modern preacher. They are to be tried by the fire of conscience and weighed in the balance of reason. Only thus may the teachings of any man, ancient or modern, be adopted as the rule of life.

But, in conclusion, while insisting upon my right and your right to criticise the words of Jesus to the same extent as those of any other, while denying the binding force of many sayings ascribed to him, and asserting their ethical falsity, I unhesitatingly affirm that the grand tendency of his teaching is toward the highest and noblest manhood. He has laid the foundation deep and broad : it is for us to erect the edifice. And the corner-stone of his ethical system is the same that Zoroaster, Buddha, and Confucius each laid in the many centuries before him ; cut by each to his own fancy, yet always the same stone ; invented by none, but created by God ; the outgrowth of natural ethics, formulated by experience, and known to us as "The Golden Rule" : "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."

THE LARGER CONCEPTION OF GOD.

“Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?” — PSALM cxxxix., 7.

“He is not far from each one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being.” — ACTS xvii., 28.

IF we see a beautiful painting, or a noble statue, and are much impressed thereby, we naturally question: “Who is the artist? Who painted this picture? Who sculptured this marble?” Or, if we read a graceful poem, or an interesting story, we ask: “Who is the author? Who wrote it?” And so the child, looking forth upon the grand panorama of nature, and inspecting his own marvellous frame; hearkening to the wondrous melody of wind and wave; poring over the weird legend of creation traced upon the rocks,—questions eagerly, “Mother, who made the world?” And she answers, “My child, God made it.” And then comes the second question, “What did he make it out of?” And she tells him: “He made it out of nothing. He commanded, and the universe sprang into being.” Then comes the third question, “Mother, who made God?” She tells him that God was not made, that he always was. This heads off further inquiry in that direction, but the young inquisitor is not yet silenced. He retraces his steps,

and queries again: "How could God make the world out of nothing? Men make chairs and tables out of trees, and bricks out of clay. You make bread out of flour, which is made from wheat, which grows out of the ground. But how could God possibly make a world by just saying so?" At this point, the child may be silenced; but the question not being answered, it will haunt him throughout life.

Thus it comes that not only children ask these questions, but grown men and women ask them continually. Where does the universe come from? Where do we come from? Who or what is God? There is no use trying to silence such questions with a wave of the hand. Like Banquo's ghost, they refuse to be laid. They haunt every avenue of thought, and meet us upon every corner. They assail us with doubts and queries in continuous fusillade; and high over all, in confident derision, rings the voice of their leader, as he propounds the unanswered riddle of the ages, "Who or what is God?"

Every thought is an evolution from some lower form of thought; for, as the mind expands through experience, it constantly reworks and remodels the mental accretion of past generations. We do not reject the experience of the past: we add to it and improve upon it. Thus, to take a familiar example, the first savage outran his game, and struck it down with a stick held in the hand. His son or grandson improved on this method by throwing the stick forcibly from a distance. A later generation con-

ceived the idea of sharpening the stick at one end, and flinging it as a spear. Still later, a union of ideas caused it to occur to some one to bend a second stick, confine its elasticity by a string of twisted bark, and use this to project the first. Thus the bow and arrow came into use. The next step in the progress of ideas brought the cross-bow, which could be sighted at an object. Then came the discovery of gunpowder, and its application, wherein another union of ideas was necessary. A bamboo from which the pith has been extracted is used by savages as a tube from which to blow arrows. This probably gave rise to the idea of confining the explosive gunpowder in a tube or barrel. This tube or barrel was at first made of wood, burned or bored out, and strengthened by rings of metal. This in turn was succeeded by the old-fashioned matchlock, about equally dangerous at both ends. And finally, after many generations, we of to-day have handsome breech-loading rifles, with telescope sights, piercing the bull's eye at a mile range. It is not probable that this weapon has yet nearly arrived at perfection; but, surely, enough progress has been made from the stick of the savage to disclose the meaning of evolution in the domain of thought.

So our idea of God, whatever the individual idea may be, is an evolution from the idea of God in the mind of the first savage. He found himself in a world which he did not understand, and surrounded by powers which he could not comprehend. Hardly superior in intelligence to the wild beasts with which

he daily fought, he yet felt within himself a double nature, and ascribed the same to them. Every visible object, whether heavenly body, rock, plant, tree, or animal, became to him a spiritual entity, benevolent or malignant, enclosed, like himself, in a physical form. If a brier tore his flesh, it was the spitefulness of the indwelling spirit which caused it to do so. If water slaked his thirst, it was through the benevolence of the spirit of the stream. The flowers were mortal maidens transformed, and bearing still the beauty and grace which enraptures the soul of man. The zephyrs were the spirits of his departed friends, who came to fan his brow when heated in the chase. The sun was a genial god, benevolently inclined, but who, when angry, could smite with resistless power. The moon was a huntress, and the crescent her bended bow, the stars her hounds. Night by night, in watchfulness, she roamed the solitudes; and all who died by night were victims to her shafts.

Such were, and still are, the wild imaginings of primitive peoples; and, as none can imagine attributes outside of their own experience, the pantheon of every nation is an epitome of that nation's world. The Scandinavians at the North, fond of fighting and feasting, worshipped Odin and Thor, whom they pictured as gigantic mail-clad warriors, invincible in battle. In their valhalla, or heaven, the banquet is ever laid, and the guests partake thereof in full harness, while skalds rehearse their mighty deeds wrought in the flesh. Here, severity of climate bred a hardy

and chaste people ; and their gods and their future life were but reflections of themselves and their lives here.

Thus, again, on the other hand, the Latin nations, wooed by the seductive influences of a warm climate to lives of voluptuous self-indulgence, worshipped a pantheon of gods whose chief delights were in sensual pleasures. The Roman Jupiter is but a deified libertine. Venus is a wanton, canonized. Bacchus is drunkenness, crowned and worshipped.

Turning now to the Hebrew nation, we find them clannish, cruel, treacherous, and rapacious. Such being their character, their god is naturally a reflection thereof. The God Jehovah (or Yahweh) portrayed in the Old Testament is simply a deified Jew of a barbarous age. Is it any wonder that the great mind of Spinoza should rebel against the traditions of his fathers, and refuse to be bound by the Hebrew conception of God ?

Thus have we hurriedly inspected a portion of that long rosary of gods which humanity wears about its neck. And now we come to the latest addition thereto,—the pendant, in the form of a cross, bearing the lifeless figure of a man of gentle aspect. It is the Christ of the Christian, evolved from the Jewish Jehovah. It is, in fact, Jehovah reformed and humanized. It is the fiend-god of ancient Israel, who delighted in rapine and bloodshed, who sacked and wasted cities, tortured men, and mutilated women. This, I am told, is He who has taken upon himself the human form, and in that form is loving and

gentle, preaching a gospel of non-resistance, of love to enemies, of mercy to all creatures, of purity of life, and devotion to every form of good. Can these two be one and the same person? Yes, if good and evil, white and black, purity and corruption, are interchangeable terms; but not otherwise. The gentle Jesus, I respect and love; the cruel Yahweh, I despise and hate.

But, respecting and loving the gentle character of Jesus, the lowly carpenter of Galilee, the prophet of love to men, do we not find in him the First Great Cause, the Creator and Sustainer of Worlds? No, we do not. We find in Jesus the assumed attributes of the Godhead, but not the Godhead itself.

We are thus brought face to face with the conclusion that no god as yet offered to men can be accepted by us. We cannot accept the animism of the savage; for we have fathomed the natures and made servants of many of those mysterious agencies which he worshipped as gods. Neither can we rest satisfied with the warlike gods of Scandinavia, the lustful deities of Rome, the treacherous Yahweh of Israel, or the mystical Christ of the Christians. Not one of these can we accept as God, the author and sustainer of life, or worship as "our Father." Are we therefore atheists, without faith in God? This was what his contemporaries called Spinoza; but posterity has named him "the god-intoxicated man." Like him, we are not atheists: we are God-seekers, not God-deniers.

There are no atheists. The difficulty is that no

formula of God has yet been propounded which rises to the dignity of the subject. The expanded mind rebels against the limitations of locality and form as applied to the Infinite. Do you ask me if I believe in God? I answer, Yes and No. If you mean the God usually spoken of in the Bible, limited, localized, and formulated, then No, a thousand times No. But if you mean the all-pervading soul of nature, the wondrous intelligence thrilling and making alive man and worm and tree and flower and rock and grain of sand, then I answer, Yes, I believe and I worship. How can I fail to believe in that of which I myself am a part?

This is the God in which I believe, this is the God I worship: not a God outside of, separate and apart from, nature; but the God indwelling in nature, as absolutely and eternally inherent in nature as is life. I believe that, wherever life is, whether animal, vegetable, or mineral life, there is God. There is no atom of this universal frame without life, therefore there is no atom without God. Nor can we escape the indwelling God by death, for there is no death. Death is but transformation into new forms of life. "It is but into life we die"; and, wherever we go, we bear God with us.

As a drop to the ocean,
A mote to the whole,
So, man, is thy soul
To the Infinite Soul.

A mist from that ocean
Ascended thy breath;

A drop to that ocean
Thou fallest at death.

Thou fallest, thou hidest
In wave or in clod ;
But in God thou abidest,
And thou, too, art God.

Consider, for a moment, the stupendous majesty of this thought,—the absolute identity of all material forms with God. God is all in all. You and I, the dog, the horse, the worm, the fly, the tree, the flower, the grain of sand, all are but modes of expression of one infinite, ever-existent, eternal, unchangeable, all-pervading spirit. In view of such a thought, does not the reflection of the psalmist acquire a new significance? — “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?”

Mankind have been so engrossed in their search for a God in form, located outside of nature, in some far-away heaven, seated on a throne from whence to direct the universe, that they have as a rule quite overlooked this larger conception of the Divine. Yet such a conception was evidently held by several of the Bible writers.

Notice it in that glorious one hundred and thirty-ninth psalm, from which our text is taken. Hear it in the words of Paul: “He is not far from each one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being.” And again he says, “There is one body, and one Spirit, . . . one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all.” Jesus affirms the same conception of God, when he tells the

woman of Samaria, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth." And John follows up the same line of thought when he says, "God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him."

This view of God,—that he is a subtle essence pervading all material forms; that he is the vivifying principle of the visible universe; that he is to the universe what my life is to my body; that he is really, as Paul expresses it, "over all, and through all, and in all,"—this theory, I say, is known as "Pantheism." The word is derived from two Greek words, *Pan*, all, and *Theos*, God, and means "God in all," or "God is all." Pantheism is the common ground upon which all religions meet. It is the corner-stone of every great religion the world has ever known; it is the string upon which every system of philosophy is strung, from Zoroaster to Jesus, from Jesus to Emerson.

In this view of God, how significant become the words of Paul, "He is not far from each one of us." The love-light in your child's eyes is the smile of God. The glow of sunrise and of sunset marks the passage of his feet. He spangles the lawn with webs of gossamer, and strings priceless pearls of glittering dew on every blade of grass. The rose-bush burns with his appearing. Each spot is holy ground, consecrated by the footprints of Deity.

It follows from this view of God that idolatry is an impossible crime. I remember a poor mother sorrowing for her child, and saying that she feared

she had loved it too well. "For God is a jealous God," she said, "and will not suffer idols to be set up in the heart ; therefore, he has taken my child away." As if any mother could love her child too well ! Such a thought is blasphemy against the purest, holiest emotion that glorifies our human life. In the love of our dear ones, we best prove our love for the Divine Spirit which pervades them and us. Let us make broad and strong the bands of love, that love may triumph over death. Let us not fear the jealousy of a petty man-made God, lest we love too much. Surely it is better to love too much than too little. There is no jealousy in God, for God is all in all. If you worship your wife or your child, you but worship God ; for God pervades them, and they are parts of him. Here is a sentiment put by a Hindu writer into the mouth of Brahma, which I commend to your attention :—

"I am the same to all mankind. They who honestly serve other gods involuntarily worship me. I am he that partaketh of all worship, and I am the reward of all worshippers."

Now compare the grand magnanimity of this utterance with the petty jealousy of Yahweh, the tribal deity of ancient Israel, as exhibited in the following passages : "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." "For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." "Thou shalt worship no other god : for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jeal-

ous god." "The Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous god." "If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, . . . thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: but thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage."

Is it not time that our devotional services be expurgated of such sentiments; that our conception of God be ennobled from that of the degraded rabble of Hebrew slaves who followed Moses out of Egypt over three thousand years ago?

Who can doubt, for a moment, that a marvellous intelligence pervades the universe? Not outside of it, not directing it as an outside agency, but within it, inherent to every portion, every atom of it. Our own intelligence and that of the animals needs no demonstration; but intelligence does not stop with the animals: we find it also in the plants. We have all seen flowers nestle their leaves together, and go to sleep at nightfall. There are plants which set traps for, and catch, flies upon which they feed. Some species of the sensitive plant become angry if

disturbed, and emit a pungent odor. Various flowers depend on the bee, the butterfly, and the humming-bird for their fertilization, and adapt themselves to the habits of their visitors.

Can any one in his right mind ascribe such nice adaptation of means to an end to a mere conjunction of senseless atoms, or say there is no design here exhibited? That there is a marvellous intelligence pervading nature, and adapting every part thereof to wise purposes, must be apparent to the most sceptical. But there are insuperable difficulties in the way of accepting the theory of a localized God, outside of nature, superintending and directing the minutiae thereof. Therefore, I prefer to regard God as the internal life of nature, and all material forms as the expression of that life. He is "over all, and through all, and in all."

The practical application of this theory of God to our daily life must be most admirable. Recognizing the God in all things, and through him our divine relationship to all, the heart will be filled with tenderness and love for every form of being. We shall realize what Longfellow has so beautifully expressed in his "Aftermath":—

"That life in all its forms is one,
And that its secret conduits run
Unseen, but in unbroken line,
From the great Fountain-head Divine,
Through man and beast, through grain and grass."

We shall recognize our kinship to our dog and our horse, even as we do to our child; and we shall

extend to all creatures our mercy and protection. Even the flowers shall attain a new significance in their fragrance and colorings, and every bud shall open to reveal the indwelling God. But, you will ask, is not this simple animism? Wherein does this differ from the worship of primitive man, who endows each visible object with an invisible soul?

It differs in this: that, whereas the savage recognizes and worships a myriad isolated intelligences, good and evil, I worship the infinite sum of all intelligences; he worships the separate drops, I worship the ocean which contains all the drops. Some of those drops are dearer to me than others, and with these I seek to be; but those for which I care not are equally parts of God. Yet I believe that the nature-worship of the savage is nearer to the truth than is any creed formulated hitherto by the conceited pedantry of book-men. As Jesus expressed it, "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Untutored savages frequently hold a far purer faith than Christian missionaries carry to them.

Thus feebly have I striven to convey to you what I regard as the larger conception of God. When I shall pass beyond the veil of death, I expect to see and recognize the friends I have known and loved here; but I do not expect ever to see God in form. There, as here, no part can comprehend the whole, the finite cannot contain the Infinite. Therefore, as here I travel over the earth,

inspecting its beauties, wondering at the starry heavens above, and worshipping the indwelling, all-pervading Spirit, so there I shall also admire and wonder and worship in exact proportion to my mental growth. Throughout eternity, I never expect to meet with any higher or nobler expression of God than a perfected man or woman. This is his highest expression here, and I can conceive of no higher expression there. We are gods, for God dwells in us and we in him. Surely the dignity of such a thought should impel us to nobility of life.

And now as to the origin of the material universe: I believe that it has always been. It is the visible expression, or ever-existent body, of the invisible, ever-existent soul of God. It is impossible to conceive of a time when it was not in some form. "Out of nothing, nothing comes"; and it is impossible to conceive of the creation of worlds out of nothing. This world in which I live, this body which is my visible covering, this soul which is myself, have ever been in some form, and must eternally remain. Nothing can be created, and nothing can be lost. The meanest worm of earth, both as to matter and intelligence, is, as to its ultimate atoms, co-existent and co-eternal with God; for it is a component part of God.

Tell me,—is not this conception of one uniform, supreme intelligence, alike pervading the atom and linking together distant worlds, ever working, ever evolving, ever progressing,—is not this, I say, a larger, grander, nobler conception of God than the

petty, jealous being portrayed in the evangelical creeds, who made men to destroy them, and then, repenting of his own malignance, died on the cross to save them from himself? In the light of this larger conception, cannot we worship the Supreme Soul more intelligently, feeling that "he is not far from each one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being"?

"All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body Nature is, and God the soul;
That, changed through all, is yet in all the same;
Great in the earth as in the ethereal frame;
Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glowes in the stars, and blossoms in the trees;
Lives through all life, extends through all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates unspent,
Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part,
As full, as perfect, in a hair as heart;
As full, as perfect, in vile man that mourns
As the rapt seraph that adores and burns:
To Him no high, no low, no great, no small:
He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all."

THE SECRET OF JESUS.

“I and the Father are one.”—JOHN x., 30.

WHAT was the secret of Jesus' influence,—first, upon those about him; second, upon posterity? That that influence was and still is great, none can deny; for the results are before us. Four hundred millions of Christians to-day worship in his name and call him Master. Nearly one-third of the earth's population count the gibbet upon which he died, as a condemned malefactor, a sacred emblem. Kings acknowledge him the “King of kings,” and autocrats bow down to him as “Lord of all.” Even we, who deny his divinity, yet speak his name with reverence, call him leader, and bow to his suggestions. These are tremendous facts that cannot be gainsaid. We have found an effect, let us now look for the cause.

There can be no effect without a cause: “Out of nothing, nothing comes.” As this is true of matter, so it is equally true of mind. It were worse than idle to depreciate the personality of Jesus, or to say that this grand movement sprang from a man of straw. A cipher, though infinitely multiplied, produces only a cipher; but here the grand result

transcends all power of human calculation. Who, then, was Jesus, and what the secret of his influence? He was a Jew, the son of Joseph and Mary, born at Nazareth in Galilee (an outlying country district of Palestine) about eighteen hundred and eighty-seven years ago. His family were poor and obscure; and he was brought up to his father's trade of carpentry, and probably worked thereat in his native village until middle life. Then he became a public teacher, and—for probably one year, possibly a year and a half—traversed his little home district of Galilee (about equal in extent to this county of Plymouth) discoursing to the country people upon moral, religious, and philosophic subjects. His following was small, and at best but faint-hearted; for, at his trial before Pilate on the charges of heresy and sedition, not one stood forward to defend him, and he who had been the loudest in protestations of fidelity denied him with curses. He died alone, forsaken by the friends on whom he depended, and apparently forsaken by God in whom he trusted. Yet even in death he triumphed, and the fruits of his victory are here to-day. How was this accomplished?

The genius of the Jewish people ran ever to religion: all other matters were of secondary importance, and must give way to this. When wandering as separate tribes, their priests ruled them in peace and led them in war; when confederated into one nation, the Church was still the power behind the throne: the priesthood made and un-

made kings at will; for they claimed to utter the oracles of God, and the people believed them.

Thus, though for seven hundred years before Jesus the nation had been disintegrated, and tossed, through fortune of war, as flies the shuttle-cock from hand to hand, yet the Jews clung ardently to their hope of national restoration: "*Sometime* a leader must arise, who shall restore Israel to her former greatness."

Now, during these seven centuries of servitude, the Jews had, of necessity, been intimately associated with many nations whose civilization far surpassed their own. Among these may be mentioned the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Chaldeans, the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans. That they had profited by such association is undoubted. Not only in secular matters were their ideas enlarged, but their subsequent religious traditions and observances show marked traces of these outside influences. Their language, also, was modified by such association, and, in some districts, even radically changed. Thus, in the time of Jesus, in Galilee the Aramaic or Syriac dialect was spoken instead of Hebrew; and it is supposed that this was the language in which Jesus taught. Greek was also spoken by the more educated people and government officials in Asia, but Latin was the court language at Rome. It is probable that, in addition to the Syriac dialect, Jesus knew something of Greek; for his trial before Pilate must have been conducted in that language, and nothing is said to

indicate that interpreters were used. He may have understood Hebrew; but this is not likely, as his quotations from the Scriptures are invariably from the Syriac translation used in the Galilean synagogues, and not from the Hebrew originals.

To those who claim that Jesus was God, it has ever been a stumbling-block that he taught no new thing. So long as Christians remained in ignorance of the teachings of those seers and prophets of the world who preceded Jesus, it was an easy thing for the Church to assert that this man only had taught God's truth, that he only had "brought life and immortality to light." But modern research has stripped the veil from many an ancient mystery, and the art of printing has made every hind a sage. The ploughboy of to-day knows more than did the priest of a thousand years ago; and, moreover, *his* best interest lies in discovery, not in concealment. Let churchmen mourn over creed decadence, and bewail the spread of unbelief. I hail both as a sign of progress. Truth is eternal, and no assaults can possibly shake her citadel. Falsehood alone has need to fear investigation; a phantom of darkness, she fades before the light of day.

Modern research has revealed the storehouses from whence the man Jesus drew his supplies. He created nothing: he simply adapted the materials already at hand. The gold had been coined and recoinced by his predecessors; and he minted it once again, and passed it on. The wisdom of Egypt was his, and he took it from hands of sages entombed

five thousand years before his birth. The wisdom of Persia was his; and, through the dim colonnade of a remote and misty past, Zoroaster whispered his godlike message. Travellers from India and far Cathay brought sayings of Buddha and precepts of Confucius,—like choice wine already mouldy with age. The Siren of Socrates sang constantly to him the praise of virtue, and affirmed the reality of the immortal life. “Heir of all the ages,” and “foremost in the files of time,” Jesus drew tribute from every treasury, remelted and recoinced the gold, impressed his likeness upon every coin, and sent it forth, brighter than before, to an enlarged mission of circulation. The glory of Jesus is not that he created the gold, but that he refined it; not that he first minted the coin, but that he reminted it and made it more adaptable to human needs.

“But, if this were all,” you will say, “wherein does he surpass us? We have all the wisdom of all the ages spread before us to a far greater extent than he can possibly have had; and, in addition thereto, we have the benefit of his teaching. Why cannot we equal or even surpass him in the use of this material?”

The answer is twofold: first, we lack capacity; second, we lack purpose.

Here is a library of ten thousand volumes, containing an epitome of the world’s wisdom; and here are one hundred youths who have free access thereto, all having equal advantages. What is the result? You will say, Perhaps one of the hundred may

become an Emerson ; the remaining ninety-nine will never rise above mediocrity.

True ; and why is this ? Given the same advantages, why do some succeed and others fail ? As well ask, Why does one egg produce a tortoise ; a second, a barn-door fowl ; a third, the melodious songster of the woods ; a fourth, the eagle soaring in the sky ? It is simply the universal law of difference everywhere apparent. "Like produces like," but never exactly alike. It is supposed that there are no two blades of grass, no two grains of sand, in this whole world, exactly alike ; and, as we find this difference in physical structure, so we find it in mental structure. Infinite variety of form and infinite diversity of gifts insure the infinite change necessary to our enjoyment of life, and prove infinite wisdom. How flat, how stale, how unprofitable were life without such variety ! If trees were all birch or all beech or all poplar ; if men were the only living organisms, and each an exact copy of all his fellows in form and feature, in thought and act,—unvaried prints from an unchanging negative,—how life would pall upon the sense, how wearisome must be the monotony !

And as we find infinite variety of form, so we find infinite variety of capacity ; and this not only from species to species, but from individual to individual : from Jesus to Emerson, from Emerson to the savage. Such variation comes not from special providence, in the usual acceptance of that term : it is the necessary effect of natural law ; yet that natural law is

none the less providential. That God works by means does not invalidate the fact that God works.

I argue, therefore, that Jesus was a man of great natural capacity; not the pallid effeminate of mediæval art, but a born leader,—virile, strong, a sound mind in a sound body. As Saul towered head and shoulders above all the warriors of Israel, so Jesus towered intellectually head and shoulders above the learned sages of his time; and this not because of greater opportunity, but because of greater capacity. He was undoubtedly the greatest man of his time. Was he the greatest man of all time? Conventionality demands the stereotyped answer, Yes. Some of you say Yes, and it would please you if at this moment I should answer Yes. Will it not please you equally well if I set conventionality aside, and answer honestly, I do not know? He may have been. I find the record of many great intellects and grand lives upon the page of history. At best, "comparisons are odious," for no two lives are ever subject to exactly the same conditions; therefore, no two lives are capable of comparison. Let us rest at this: judging by the work he did, Jesus was a man wonderfully endowed with the intellectual quality. But this was not his only or his chief characteristic. There was a power in the man transcending the intellect; and this latter power I count the grand secret of his success. I refer to the intensity of his spiritual life.

I do not believe, I have not believed for years, that the nature of Jesus differed in any sense from

ours. He was a man like one of us,—subject to temptation, liable to sin. I do not believe he was perfect, for perfection belongs only to God; and, if we can credit the record, he expressly denied that he was perfect: “Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one.”

Such a conclusion could arise in his mind only from a consciousness of guilt. Temptation is not sin. Temptation is one of the threads out of which the fabric of life is woven. It is a part of the divine plan for our education; and we are no more responsible for our temptations than we are for our existence. Our responsibility is not that we are tempted, but that we yield when we might and ought to resist. The limit of our responsibility is the length of our tether,—not one inch less or more. A bowl has been handed to us. Shall we stir up the impurities it contains, or shall we distil only the clear liquid for our draught? That Jesus was tempted goes without saying, for temptation is inwoven with the very fibre of every human life; that he was tempted implies a capacity to sin, for without such capacity there could be no temptation. That he did, to a limited degree, yield to temptation, I have no doubt; for if he did not, then he was perfect, and if he was perfect, then he was God. But he expressly denies his perfection, and thereby reveals his consciousness of transgression. Jesus was not a perfect man in the absolute sense of that word, for there never has been and never can be a perfect man; but he was pre-eminently a good man, walking with God. The

crucifixion of his body was but an after-type of that self-crucifixion, the crucifixion of all base desires, which he had already wrought upon his mind. Thus had he arisen to that sublime height of spiritual communion wherein the harmonies of God were revealed, and he could truly say, "I and the Father are one." Not one in personality, but one in purpose; not one in power, but one in the complete self-surrender of the creature to the Creator.

I doubt not that all here have experienced hours of soul exaltation, when heaven and God seemed nearer than usual. I believe that such experiences might be had to some extent by every human being, if he would. I believe that with some this condition of divine insight might be made permanent even during their earth-life. It is, I think, a foreshadowing of some condition beyond,—higher, grander, nobler,—to which we shall some day attain. Why are these seasons so infrequent and so fleeting? Is it not because our lives are on so low a plane? Like the serpent, we crawl in the dust, when, like the eagle, our destiny points us to the stars.

It is this that I mean, when I say that I believe Jesus to have been one with us in nature. It is this that I mean, when I say that I believe him to have been superior to us in capacity and purpose. As Shakspeare had a genius for letters, and Napoleon for war, and Herschel for astronomy, and Agassiz for natural history,—so Jesus had a genius for religion. Each one here knows something of composition, yet there is not a Shakspeare among us. Each knows

something of astronomy, but we look in vain for a Herschel. We have all studied natural history, but where is the Agassiz? Why have these men surpassed us, each in his peculiar province? Simply because, first, Nature — which is but another name for God — had endowed him with a special aptitude for that work; and, second, because he consecrated his life to that work. Here, then, I believe, is the secret of Jesus' success in a nutshell,—first, a special aptitude for religion, and, second, a special consecration to religion. Through that special consecration, that unwavering purpose, he developed his natural aptitude, and, trampling under foot the grossness of his earth-nature, rose to the sublime heights of spiritual communion. In the complete satisfaction of that wondrous communion, fed with that immaculate bread of heaven for which our souls hunger, perceiving the supreme harmony in which we believe, but which our ears are too dull to hear,—might he not truly say, “I and the Father are one”?

Other ears than his have heard that wondrous harmony; other faces than his, uplifted, have been touched by the light that shines from heaven; other feet have trampled low desire under foot, and scaled the shining bastions; other hands, upstretched, have drawn down the blessing from above. Innumerable multitudes keep step in the onward march. Ten million times ten million voices swell the chorus of praise. But the loving acclamation of a world has proclaimed him leader and chief; and who shall dispute his title? Let us not waste

time in idle comparisons : we shall not dim the glory of others by acknowledging that he is worthy. Let us not waste time in complaining that we with one talent cannot do what he did with ten : if we have but one, for that one only must we render account. His example is ours to follow so nearly as we can. The temptations we endure, he suffered, and at last conquered. The spiritual life he attained on earth may be ours, if we will ; not perhaps to the same degree, but the same in kind. Is it not worth our while to strive for it, in the light of his teaching and example ?

PAUL'S LIFE AND WORK.

EMERSON calls Plato "the twin star of Socrates, so intimately associated with him that the most powerful glass cannot tell them apart." So, looking backward to the dim dawn of Christianity, we find the twin stars of Jesus and Paul glittering on the horizon, and are often at a loss to distinguish between them. The parallel is striking to a degree. Socrates wrote nothing; and principally through the writings of his disciple Plato are his teachings preserved. Jesus wrote nothing; and principally to the exertions of Paul are we indebted that Christianity did not end on Calvary. But here the comparison ceases; for Plato sat ten years at the feet of Socrates, hearkening to the words of wisdom which flowed from his lips, and with ready pen transcribing these for transmission to posterity. He attended him on his trial, and was one of the favored few who heard that wondrous discourse upon immortality, with which the dying sage cheered his desponding friends. But, on the contrary, Paul never met Jesus; and all that he believed and taught concerning him was not of his own knowledge, but from the evidence of others. Thus, in the history of Socrates, we need only question as to the reliability

of Plato; but, in the history of Jesus, we must satisfy ourselves, first, as to the reliability of Paul, and, second, as to the reliability of his sources of information.

As to who Paul was, and what were his teachings, we have the best possible authority in his own letters to the early churches; and from these we glean the following facts: He was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, and prided himself on the purity of his Hebrew descent. He was educated as a rabbi or teacher in the strict letter of the Jewish ceremonial, and became a zealous Pharisee. In observance of the Mosaic law, his conduct was irreproachable; and in his zeal therefor he became a bitter persecutor of those Greek Jews who acknowledged the crucified Nazarene as Christ. He describes himself as weak in bodily presence, and of no account in speech; but that he was a subtle theologian and brilliant writer, we can see for ourselves. Yet, though he became pre-eminently the apostle of Christianity to the Gentiles, he was never thoroughly acquainted with the Greek language, and usually dictated his letters,—sometimes, however, adding a short postscript at the end, in his own handwriting.

Of so much only are we certain. In addition thereto, we are informed, in the Book of Acts (written by unknown hands some sixty years after his death), that he was born at Tarsus, the capital city of the Roman province of Cilicia, and was at first known by the Jewish name of Saul; that he in-

herited the rights of Roman citizenship through his father; was educated in Jerusalem, in the school of the Jewish Rabbi Gamaliel; was a young man at the time of Stephen's martyrdom, and took part therein.

These averments may all be true; yet it is at least worthy of consideration that, had Paul been born at Tarsus and spent any considerable portion of his youth there, he must have become familiar with the Greek language, and have been impressed by Greek habits of thought; for this city was a centre of philosophy and culture, second only in importance to Athens and Alexandria. Again, had he, as alleged, been educated in Jerusalem, he must have been informed concerning John the Baptist and his preaching in the wilderness near by; whereas, throughout his writings, he shows no sign of such information. He must, further, have been cognizant of the teachings of Jesus and of his trial and crucifixion; whereas, he appears never to have seen Jesus, or even to have heard of him during the latter's lifetime.

As to what changed this fierce persecutor of the Christians into the most zealous advocate of Christianity, we have, unfortunately, no answer from the man himself. He simply tells us that God had, from his birth, designed him for the apostolate; and he expressly denies that any other person contributed to his change of thought. The Book of Acts gives no less than three separate accounts of his miraculous conversion by a vision from heaven. But, as

these accounts contradict each other in important details, and are all at variance with Paul's own words, we are compelled to reject them as wholly unreliable. But we glean from his own statements that, becoming perplexed over the current traditions concerning the crucified Jesus, whom he had hitherto regarded as an impostor and blasphemer, justly condemned, he left Damascus, where he was then living, and retired to Arabia, where, in some obscure village, apart from all former associations, he probably supported himself by his trade of tent-making, while, by diligent study of the Hebrew Messianic prophecies, and comparison of these with the stories he had gathered regarding Jesus, he became convinced that the latter had really been the Messiah. Then, gradually, he evolved that intricate system of theology with which he subsequently impressed the world, and under which the world still labors as under a hideous nightmare. I refer to the doctrine of original sin and the blood atonement of Christ.

The Jewish religion rested on the law of Moses. Only by strict observance of that law in all its details was justification before God possible. Only thus could the individual or the nation find favor with God. The coming of the Messiah, and, under him, the restoration of the nation to its former magnificence, was the signal of divine favor promised by the prophets and anxiously expected by the people. The assertion that Messiah had died upon the cross, a condemned malefactor, was an abomination to every loyal Jew. Such a doctrine involved

the complete overthrow of Judaism; and therefore it was that Paul had so rigorously persecuted the hated sect of the Nazarenes. Yet, was it wholly impossible that a higher revelation might abrogate the law of Moses? Had the law proved adequate? Alas! it had not. Then, in the wisdom of God, might not a new way be opened? Only a righteous nation might hope for the Messiah; but how sinful was this nation! Could it be that God had provided an atonement for their sin? Could it be that the Messiah had really come in the person of this man Jesus? had fulfilled the law in his life, and made atonement for the nation's sins in his death? But the cross,—that death of infamy! Surely, here was proof positive that God had rejected him. And yet, the greater the infamy, the greater the atonement. Suppose it was true, as asserted, that Jesus had indeed risen from the underworld of shades and ascended to God the Father, thence presently to return and establish his kingdom upon earth. Then, all would be clear. But could this be true?

Such, doubtless, were the thoughts and questions which occupied the mind of Paul during his sojourn in Arabia. He reflected on the peaceful courage with which the Jew-Christians braved death for the name of Jesus. He revolved all the current traditions concerning Jesus in his mind,—the purity of his life, the beauty of his teachings, the dignity of his death, the faith of his followers. Nay, it could not be a delusion: surely, *this was "the Christ"*!—the Christ, not of the Jews only, but of the whole

world; the Christ only temporarily dead, and soon to return to glory. Not lightly or quickly did he arrive at this decision. How long he remained in seclusion, he does not inform us; but not until three years had elapsed from his conversion did he formally take upon himself the mission to the Gentiles, and begin to preach Christ and him crucified.

To a proper understanding of his preaching, it is necessary that we know the preacher. Let us, then, picture a man of marked Jewish type; an intensely nervous temperament; a fiery and impetuous spirit in a feeble body; a weak and quavering voice, thrilled by conviction, and at times rising to sublimest heights of impassioned eloquence; a poetic nature, wont to idealize and soar above the common things of earth; a brain subtle and metaphysical, constantly striving after the mysteries of God; an imagination restless, glowing, fervent, through which, during periods of fasting and devotion, he experienced visions and dreams of such extraordinary vividness that they seemed almost real. Such was the man who was the founder of Christianity. When I say that Paul, and not Jesus, was the founder of Christianity, let not this assertion startle you. Jesus, out of the depths of a profoundly religious soul, taught natural religion only. Love—love to God and love to man—was the key-note of his discourse. Paul, out of a disordered imagination, evolved an elaborate system of theology,—which Jesus would have repudiated with scorn,—and named this system Christianity. Therefore it

is that I count it a higher honor to be called "a disciple of Jesus" than "a Christian," or follower of Paul.

The death of Jesus had dispersed the disciples at Jerusalem; but gradually, as reports began to circulate that he had risen from the underworld of shades, and had ascended temporarily to heaven, thence speedily to return, they reassembled and formed a little secret community, over which James, the brother of Jesus, Peter, and John presided.

These believers in Jesus differed but very slightly from other Jews. They kept the letter of the Mosaic law rigidly, practising circumcision, the washing of hands, and all other prescribed ceremonies, as did the mass of their fellow-countrymen. Their chief, James, was especially a formalist; and his strict observance of the ceremonial law gained for him, among the Jews, the title of "the Just." The earliest church historian, himself a Jew-Christian, says that James was holy from his birth, abstaining from all intoxicating drinks, from animal food, and from anointing and bathing himself; that he wore nothing but linen; and, through constant prayer in the temple, his knees became calloused like those of a camel. Thus it was that the apostles and disciples of Jesus, and even his own family, misunderstood and misapplied his teachings. They "made clean the outside of the cup and of the platter," and trusted wholly to forms for their justification before God. In fact, the only difference between them and the other Jews was this,—that,

while the latter expected a Messiah not yet arrived, the former believed Messiah had already come, and would soon return to establish his kingdom. And, in their narrow conception of Jesus' meaning, this kingdom which he should shortly establish was to be an earthly kingdom for the benefit of Jews only; and they, his personal friends, were to hold the chief offices therein.

From the very first, Paul seems to have entertained a larger conception of Jesus' mission, or, rather, the same conception more elaborated. He argued that salvation was not for the Jews only, but for all that believe. "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." Therefore, upon his conversion, he did not go to Jerusalem, or in any way submit himself to the elders there resident; but, establishing himself at Antioch, the capital city of Syria,—a place equal in population and importance to Paris of to-day,—he there preached to Jews and Gentiles indiscriminately the doctrine of the risen Christ, the immediate coming of the kingdom, and justification through faith in Christ. To the Jews he was still a Jew, and probably, in his daily life, strictly observed the Jewish forms. But of his Gentile converts he required no form whatever, not even circumcision: simply repentance, a pure life, and belief in Jesus as the Messiah. Upon these conditions, he promised them an equal share with the children of Israel in the kingdom soon to be established.

His eloquence and zeal gained many converts,

and these naturally talked much among themselves about "the Christ" and the looked-for kingdom. Now, we know that "Christ" is but a title, and not a name. It is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word "Messiah," and is translated by the English word "anointed." When we speak of "the Christ," it is as if we spoke of "the Governor," or "the Judge." And, as there have been many "governors" and many "judges" among us, so among the Jews, from time to time, there were many men who took the title of "Christ." Therefore it is that I prefer to call Jesus by his own name, which seems to me much more honorable and distinctive than the title "Christ," which has been borne by so many mere adventurers. But the people of Antioch, hearing Paul's converts talk so much about "Christ," and supposing that to be the name of a man, called them, in derision, "Christians"; and so the name has come down to us. Had the converts talked more about the man Jesus, his noble life and grand moral precepts, and less about the expected Christ and the kingdom in which they selfishly hoped to hold office, the nickname would have been different, and we should probably be known as "Disciples of Jesus" or "Jesuits" rather than as "Christians."

With their strict notions in regard to form and the exclusiveness of "the kingdom," it was hardly to be expected that James and his community at Jerusalem would be satisfied with Paul's methods. At first, they heard only that this former persecutor

had by some means been converted, and was preaching the gospel to the heathen. Knowing him to be a Jew, a Pharisee in good standing, they naturally supposed that of course he obliged all his converts to conform to the Mosaic law and become Jews, before admitting them to Christian fellowship and a share in the kingdom. They therefore thanked God for this new recruit, and were content. But what was their indignation to learn presently that this man Paul boldly promised the kingdom to all pagans who would accept Jesus as "the Christ," without circumcision and without the law. Such heresy must be looked into; and certain zealous Jew-Christians were despatched to Antioch, there to oppose Paul and bring him to his senses.

The counter-preaching of these orthodox zealots had its natural effect in a division of Paul's church, and he saw with sorrow the results of long years of labor in danger of destruction through strife of faction. In this dilemma, he determined to waive that pride of spirit which hitherto had kept him an absolutely independent worker, and to go to Jerusalem, there to explain his action to the three apostles and ask their blessing on his work. He went, taking with him two companions, and, after considerable controversy, succeeded in persuading James, Peter, and John to withdraw their opposition. They did not renounce their position, however, as to the necessity of the law's observance, but it was agreed to leave the question in abeyance until Jesus' return. Then he should decide it. But, as a condition of

their non-interference, it was stipulated that Paul should take up a collection among the heathen converts, and transmit it to the needy brethren at Jerusalem. Doubtless glad to settle the matter on such easy terms, Paul returned with his companions to Antioch. But this was only the beginning of his troubles. After a time, Peter came to Antioch,—with what object does not appear. At first, he associated with the Greek converts on equal terms, and ate with them at table; but, presently, certain of the orthodox arrived from Jerusalem, being sent by James, and took Peter to task for his laxity of behavior. The result was that the latter veered completely around, refused longer to associate with the Gentile brethren, and insisted further that these latter must conform their mode of living to the Jewish law. But the earnest and fiery Paul could hardly be expected to put up with such fickleness in his brother apostle. In the presence of the whole congregation, he “withstood him to the face,” and upbraided him with inconsistency and dissimulation. The conflict resulted in a definite breach between them; and Paul finally left Antioch, and went forth as a missionary. First, he made a short journey to the island of Cyprus and to some of the neighboring Syrian cities, and there established churches. Then he crossed over into Europe; and for several years he seems to have travelled through the central and western portions of Asia Minor, in Macedonia (now Turkey) and Achaia (now Greece), sometimes alone, sometimes in company with others; settling now

here, now there,—in Galatia, at Corinth, at Ephesus, for a few months, perhaps, at a time; establishing churches, preaching Christ and the approaching kingdom with indefatigable zeal, and exhorting men to holiness of life as a preparation for the good time coming. At Philippi and Thessalonica, he was roughly handled by the Jews, and, being obliged to fly from the latter city, retired to Corinth, and from there wrote two letters to the little community he had just founded. These two Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians are supposed to have been written about the year 53 A.D., twenty years after the death of Jesus. If this supposition is well founded, they are undoubtedly the earliest Christian Scriptures, and the foundation of our New Testament. The Epistles to the Galatians and Corinthians are supposed to have been written some two or three years later, and those to the other churches somewhat later yet.

For twenty years, Paul had followed his chosen profession as the apostle of Christ to the Gentiles. During this period, he had endured all manner of hardship and trial. Constantly travelling by sea and land,—and how inadequate were the means of conveyance in those early days we may well imagine,—refusing aid from the churches, and supporting himself, as best he might, by working off and on at his trade; ill-treated and insulted by Jews and Gentiles, by Greeks and Romans; stoned by the populace and scoffed at by the aristocracy,—he tells us: “Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.

Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep [tossed on a spar]; in journeyings often, in perils of rivers [having to swim them when swollen by torrents], in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen [the Jews], in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in labour and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches."

The anxiety of which he here speaks was doubtless occasioned by the constant jealousy and interference of James, Peter, and their party at Jerusalem. The truce patched up upon his first visit had never been kept by them. The visit of Peter to Antioch, which resulted in driving Paul away from that city, was but the re-commencement of hostilities. Emisseries from Jerusalem followed him everywhere, denying his authority, and striving to nullify his preaching. Think of the tremendous courage of the man. He who had never seen Jesus, who was, by his own confession, "as one born out of due time," dared to withstand the apostles of Jesus, and preach a doctrine wholly at variance with theirs. It had been agreed, for a consideration, to leave the whole question to be settled by Jesus, when he should presently return; but the years went by, and still he did not come. Therefore, the apostles re-

ceded from the agreement, and renewed their opposition, striving to win every Gentile society which Paul formed over to Jewish Christianity. Thus it was that he had such "anxiety for all the churches."

The weight of years and the hardships of his life began to tell upon him. He had always preferred preaching in the larger cities, but had never yet visited Rome. It was now his ambition to preach Christ and his coming kingdom in the capital of the world; but, if he left the churches of Asia and Greece, in his absence they would surely be won over or dispersed by James and Peter. To guard against this, he determined once more to visit Jerusalem, taking with him a large sum of money, with which to purchase peace. This money the Gentile churches were urged, by letter and by exhortation, to collect with all possible speed.

How large a sum was raised, we do not know, but it must have been considerable; and, with this, Paul went again to Jerusalem, taking with him Titus and seven other friends.

As to how the party were received by James, Peter, and the others, we have no reliable report; but it is more than probable that Paul was dealt with treacherously.

The Book of Acts — compiled long afterward, with a distinct political purpose—gives the following account, which may or may not be true, its object being to gloss over these early quarrels, and prove Paul a thorough Jew, preaching to Gentiles only when the Jews refused to hear him, and submitting in all things to James and Peter.

Certain Jews from Ephesus, who were enemies of his, observed him, one day, in the temple; and, having seen him, a short time before, walking with a Greek friend named Trophimus, they jumped at the conclusion that Paul was in the habit of desecrating the place of worship by bringing Gentiles therein. Filled with rage at the thought, by their cries they incited a riot, in which he must surely have been killed, had not the Roman garrison come to the rescue, and taken him into custody. Even then the soldiers were compelled to carry their prisoner bodily, in order to preserve him from the infuriated mob. In this way, he was at last brought into the castle, and placed in confinement. Later, a conspiracy to murder him having been discovered, the captain of the garrison despatched him by night, under escort, to Cæsarea, to be tried by the provincial governor, Felix. Here he remained in prison two years, without judgment, until Felix was succeeded in office by Festus, who speedily called the case for hearing. At the hearing, Festus showed some disposition to accede to the request of the Jews that Paul should be sent back to Jerusalem for trial; but the latter, knowing that this was but an excuse upon their part to get an opportunity to murder him, stood upon his rights as a Roman citizen, and appealed to Cæsar at Rome. This appeal, of course, stayed all further proceedings before the local tribunal; and, along with two friends and several other prisoners, Paul was given in charge to a centurion, and embarked on a merchant-vessel for the capital.

They encountered much bad weather, and were finally wrecked on the island of Malta; but fortunately escaped with their lives, though losing all besides. After three months' stay on the island, they procured another ship, and proceeded to Rome.

There was in Rome, at this time, a small community of Christians already founded; and a number of these brethren met Paul and his companions at Appii Forum, about forty miles outside the walls, and escorted them into the city. We are not told to which of the two sects these Christians belonged; but we may well believe the historian when he says that, when Paul saw them, "he thanked God, and took courage."

We learn that he remained two years in Rome, a prisoner, but living in his own lodgings, the soldier in whose charge he was being constantly chained to him by the arm. During this period, the Epistles to Timothy, Philemon, and the Philip-pians were probably written.

From this on, all is bare conjecture as to his subsequent life or ultimate fate.

On July 19 of the year 64 A.D., a fire broke out in Rome, and raged for nine days with irresistible fury, destroying nearly the whole city. The Emperor Nero, who had already made himself notorious by his crimes and debauchery, was firmly believed by the people to have caused the conflagration. It is even charged that he viewed the scene with delight from a neighboring hill, and amused himself during its progress by reciting verses and

playing on a musical instrument. However this may be, he speedily found that his own safety required that suspicion should be directed to some other quarter. He therefore publicly accused the Christians of the deed, and instituted a most horrible persecution against them. They were denounced as "enemies of mankind," and treated as such. Some were crucified; some were thrown to the wild beasts of the amphitheatre; some, were wrapped in skins of animals, and worried to death by bloodhounds; some were smeared with resin and pitch, secured to stakes of pine wood, and burned at nightfall to illuminate the public gardens. In this persecution, Paul is supposed to have perished.

Thus ends the record of an heroic life. What shall be our verdict thereon?

PAUL'S THEOLOGY OF "CHRIST," AND PAUL'S RELIGION OF JESUS.

"If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."—GAL. i., 9.

"There is no distinction between Jew and Greek: for the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon him."—ROM. x., 12.

"Love is the fulfilling of the law."—ROM. xiii., 10.

THAT theology and religion have but little in common, and are often wholly antagonistic, must be evident to all who think theology is of the head, religion is of the heart. Theology is an intellectual exercise, a speculative fancy, a weird phantom of the imagination. Religion is an affection, a reaching out of the soul toward its divine source, an aspiration born of God, and tending to God.

They differ as to character, and so also do their fruits differ. Religion is gentle and loving; theology is harsh and intolerant. Religion seeks to benefit man; theology, to sustain a faction. Religion breathes the Beatitudes; theology erects the cross. Religion prays, "Father, forgive them"; theology mocks the sufferer.

Yet, with all their differences, strange to say, the two constantly touch and interlace. Theology is

sometimes religious, religion is sometimes theological; and both may harbor in the same breast.

Never was this fact more strikingly illustrated than in the life of Paul. He was, so to speak, a man within a man. Like a knight of olden time, clad in unyielding harness of iron dogma, lance in hand, he charged upon the foe, and meted out destruction at every thrust. But once penetrate beneath that forbidding exterior, and you found the warm heart of the man afire with love, and thrilled with human sympathy. Paul, the Jew-Christian, as the apostle of the Jewish "Messiah," or "Christ," was a politician, active, keen, vindictive, even unscrupulous in the attainment of his ends. Paul, the disciple of Jesus, was gentle, mild, loving, and forgiving, possessing a wealth of love sufficient to dower a universe. All men are paradoxical, but Paul is the great paradox of history. All men are contradictory, but never did another so antagonize himself as did this man.

He was bred a Jew, and, as such, believed in the "Messiah," or "Christ," whom the prophets had foretold should some day restore Israel and crush her foes. From the floating traditions which he gathered concerning Jesus, he made up his mind that he had been "the Christ," that his death had been but temporary, and that he would soon return in triumph to establish his kingdom. Thus he wrote to the church at Thessalonica: "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God:

and the dead in Christ shall rise first : then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air."

But Paul had too much common sense to believe that God would allow "the Christ" to suffer even temporary death without an object. Therefore it was that he enlarged the Jewish idea of sacrifice and blood-atonement, as expressed in the yearly offerings of animals at the temple, into a still grander sacrifice,—the sacrifice of a divine being for the sin of a world. He believed in the story of Eden and the fall of man, and argued, "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." Yet this idea was in no sense original with him. The legend of Hebrew Genesis is common to all Oriental literatures, with slight variations. Paul's theory of the incarnation is found in all the earlier systems of theology, nearly identical in form. It is a plausible way of accounting for the evil everywhere apparent in life, and of providing an escape therefrom, without impeachment either of God's justice or his mercy. It is plausible, but not logical. It assumes a perfect creation and subsequent decline, whereas the course of history shows a steady growth of the race in all noble qualities. It makes one individual suffer for the sins of another, while common sense pronounces this wholly unjust, and unworthy the legislation of a just God.

Paul, with preconceived ideas, made out an apparently strong case in consonance with those ideas. But his preconceptions fettered his judgment : his

strength is but seeming, his positions are wholly untenable. His apparently solid walls melt into mist, and fade away before the rising sun of free inquiry. The system of theology he advanced, and "the Christ" he preached, are mere delusions. They are but odorless artificials of theologic speculation, not fragrant flowers of true religion.

Thus it is that the history of Christianity discloses the strange contradiction of incessant warfare between the religion of its accredited founder and the theology of its chief apostle. The fact is, Paul was the real founder of Christianity. Jesus was not a Christian, and would have repudiated the title with scorn, as unworthy. He was no mere theologian, formulating creeds and evolving systems. He taught natural religion. Love, he recognized as the divine power; love was the shibboleth of his fraternity,—love to God and love to men.

On this simple religion of love, taught by Jesus, Paul grafted an elaborate system of theology, which, under management of the Christian Church, nearly strangled the original stock, and for many centuries made that a burden to mankind which should have proved a help. To insure the perpetuation and observance of this system, he pronounced a curse: "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." His successors emphasized the system, and, so far as lay in their power, enforced the curse. In practical application, all systems of theology are simply phases of politics, and theologians frequently de-

scend to methods quite as contemptible as those of ordinary politicians. Thus (according to Dean Milman), the early Christian councils were riotous and disgraceful as the lowest ward-meetings of our day. Assassinations were frequent, and corruption quite the rule. In like spirit, Cyril, bishop of Alexandria in the fifth century, incited his adherents to the murder of Hypatia, whose arguments he could not answer. They dragged her from her chariot, and butchered her with a ferocity which forbids detail; yet her murderer's name stands to-day emblazoned upon Christian calendars as "Saint" Cyril of Alexandria. And why not a "Saint"? His victim had youth, beauty, grace, virtue, intellect, learning, eloquence,—a rare combination of gifts and acquirements which called eager thousands daily to her lectures, and made her the centre of attraction in that centre of Greek culture. But she was a pagan, a Platonist: she denied that Jesus was more than man; she denied that Cyril, as his successor, was vicegerent of God on earth; she denied the authority of that tremendous political machine, the Christian Church, just rising into power; and therefore it was that she fell, a victim to Christian violence. Tell me, by whose spirit was this "Saint" Cyril inspired to commit that awful crime? Was it by that of the man Jesus, the apostle of love, the prophet of natural religion? or was it by that of Paul, the theologian, fierce and intolerant, the fanatical preacher of a mythical "Christ"?

The crusades of the Middle Ages to recover Pal-

estine from the Mohammedans were termed "religious" wars. Were they in fact so? If Jesus is the acknowledged representative of religion, and his teaching the test thereof, can any war be rightly termed "a religious war"? He taught absolute non-resistance: "I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also." "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." And, while human experience has proved this philosophy false to our present stage of progress, we still recognize therein an underlying truth. We see that, on the whole, Jesus was right. Sometime his ideal dream of perfect peace will be realized, but not yet. Literally taken and followed to-day, these precepts would perpetuate tyranny and promote crime. There would have been no American Revolution and no abolition of slavery; our lives and our properties would be at the mercy of the criminal classes. Therefore, common sense insists that we assert our rights, if need be, with a strong hand; yet none the less does the religious instinct whisper that the ideal religious condition is a condition of absolute peace. But, admitting that, in our present condition, the camp and the forum are both necessary adjuncts of civilization, we return to the question, Were the crusades in fact "religious" wars? and, to answer this question rationally, we must know something of their history.

From early times, a pilgrimage to Palestine was considered, in Christian circles, a pious act, conferring dignity and sanctity upon the pilgrim during the remainder of his life, and insuring him the joys of heaven at death. Therefore it was that, annually, thousands of Europeans made the pilgrimage, suffering terrible hardships and dangers by the way. So long as the Arabs held the country, the pilgrims were hospitably treated; but, under Egyptian rule, their condition became less favorable, while the subjugation of Palestine, in 1065 A.D., by the brutal Seljuk Turks of the Caucasus, made it simply intolerable. The news of their atrocities spread throughout Europe, and Peter the Hermit, a religious fanatic of Amiens in France, travelled from town to town, preaching a crusade against the infidels. His fiery eloquence roused the people to enthusiasm. The pope himself delivered an oration to a vast multitude, in which he warmly seconded the appeal of Peter. The result was that a vast and disorderly crowd of the very dregs and refuse of Christendom, badly provisioned and worse equipped, flocked to the standard of the latter. They marched across Europe in four hordes, committing the most horrible ravages by the way; and being, as they deserved, cut to pieces by the several peoples they encountered, only a remnant reached their destination, in a condition of the most abject misery.

Soon after this, however, six magnificent armies,—in all not less than six hundred thousand men,—under command of several of the leading generals

and princes of Europe, marched into Asia Minor. After more than two years of almost constant fighting, decimated by famine and disease, on July 15, 1099, the remnant of this host succeeded in capturing Jerusalem and establishing the Christian power in Palestine. For nearly fifty years this continued; and then, a portion of the country having been reconquered by the Moslems, a second crusade was preached by St. Bernard. It is estimated that not less than one million two hundred thousand fighting men took part in this expedition; but, owing to the treachery of the Greek emperor, it proved a failure, and only a mere remnant of that mighty host escaped destruction and returned to Europe.

Then Saladin arose, invaded Palestine, and conquered Jerusalem. To withstand him, Frederick of Germany, Philip of France, and Richard of England took the field in person. They succeeded in taking the fortified city of Acre, but Jerusalem remained subject to the Mohammedans. Four other crusades followed at intervals, but nothing of importance resulted; and, in the year 1291, after nearly two hundred years of unavailing warfare, Palestine was abandoned by the Christians, and has ever since remained a Turkish dependency.

In addition to these crusades proper, in the year 1212 a peasant boy of France began preaching a crusade to boys only; and such was the mad fanaticism of the time that an army of thirty thousand children embarked at Marseilles, determined on the conquest, spiritual and temporal, of the Holy Land.

Two other armies, of twenty thousand children each, left Germany with the same object. As might have been expected, all three expeditions proved utter failures. Many of the children perished by shipwreck, famine, and disease, and most of the survivors were captured by hostile nations, and sold into slavery.

Now to the consideration of our question, Were these crusades "religious" wars? Were they undertaken in the cause of religion and in the spirit of Jesus, or were they not rather outbursts of theologic intolerance, pervaded by the spirit, if indeed not excited by the words, of Paul's malediction? Was Peter the Hermit a disciple of Jesus or of Paul, when preaching the crusades, and which of the two did he most resemble?

There can be but one answer to this question. The pilgrims had no right in Palestine. If they were ill-treated by the Turks who owned the country, they could at any rate stay away. Might they not practise the teachings of Jesus in Europe quite as well as in Asia? Then, what right had they to undertake the conquest of the country? Two centuries were wasted in a vain struggle, millions of lives were sacrificed, countless treasures expended, and nothing gained. The enterprise throughout was theological, not religious: it was suggested and maintained by selfish political ambition on the part of the popes and leaders, and depended on the baser passions of the rank and file for its success. Yet, as in the divine good providence "all things work to-

gether for good," so this was no exception. Through the crusades, a conjunction of peoples was effected, which brought light to each. Here were two tremendous civilizations, Christian and Mohammedan, equally ignorant of each other, and equally bigoted. Through prolonged conflict and association, they learned each other's good qualities, and came to respect each other. Thus, also, the laity of Europe were educated, and the power of the Romish Church undermined, paving the way for the Reformation, which was virtually a protest of the religious instinct against theologic abuse. But, while the Reformation modified the evil, it did not cure it. Luther and Calvin were both theologians, and both disciples of Paul. Calvin fled from France to Switzerland, to avoid persecution, and there persecuted relentlessly all who differed from him in opinion, burning the Unitarian Michael Servetus to death at the stake. And, in doing this, he but followed out the policy of intolerance which has ever marked Christian theology, whether Protestant or Catholic, from Paul down to the present time. The horrors of St. Bartholomew's day in France, and of Mary's reign in England, are at least approximated by the persecutions of Catholics under Elizabeth, and of Quakers and other non-conformists in later times. But, whether Catholic or Protestant, Christian bigotry and intolerance have ever found sufficient warrant for the persecution of theological opponents in the curse pronounced by Paul: "If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye have received, let him be accursed."

This branch of our subject may be summed up in few words: Theology is the speculation of men concerning the unknown and unknowable; and, being mere speculation, all theologies are equally worthless. In practical application, theology is simply a phase of politics, founded in human selfishness, and seeking to support a faction. Paul the theologian was simply Paul the politician, and in this character merits only our condemnation. For eighteen centuries, his conception of the Jewish "Messiah," or "Christ," has haunted the world like a phantom of evil, breeding intolerance and hatred among men.

But, turning now from this unpleasant side of his character and influence, I ask you to consider with me Paul the man, the disciple of Jesus. And here I would say that I never rise from reading the letters of Paul without a fuller appreciation of that sentiment expressed by Theodore Parker in his sermon on "The Intellect and the Affections." He says: "Were it offered me to choose between having the grandest intellect this world has ever known, the largest learning, the most matchless eloquence, the power and dominion of an autocrat,—rather than any of these, or all of them, I would choose the great heart aflame with love for all created objects; the heart which knows no bound to its sympathies, but, made for love, embraces all in love."

Penetrating beneath his theologic crust, such was the heart of Paul. In the intensity and scope of his love, he, above all others, was pre-eminently the disciple and exponent of Jesus. For the religion of

Jesus was the religion of love. He loved all men, and by the 'cords of love drew all men unto him. He saw suffering and sorrow upon every side, and his heart was thrilled with sympathy for the suffering and the sorrowful. He looked upon the little children, and he loved them and blessed them. He loved the flowers, the birds, the trees ; and, recognizing in all things the oneness of life, he strove to impress his disciples with the same divine thought. But none of his immediate followers seem to have understood him or caught his spirit as did this man Paul, who had never seen him, and knew of him only by hearsay. Along with that spirit of Jesus, he retained many wild and fanciful notions, many crudities and superstitions from his early Hebrew training. These incongruous elements he strove constantly to harmonize, and hence the contradictions apparent in his teachings ; but, throughout all, we find the spirit of Jesus warming his soul with its wealth of sympathy. That spirit rested upon him as, in the old legend, the mantle of Elijah is said to have fallen upon the shoulders of Elisha. Upon the shining lake of Paul's imagination, the spirit of Jesus fell as falls the pebble ; and the ripples of his sympathy spread and widened until they embraced a world. Thus it was he could not rest satisfied that Jews only should be partakers of the kingdom soon to be established : he insisted that Gentiles also should be free partakers. And when James, Peter, and the other zealots at Jerusalem insisted on observance of the Jewish ceremonial law, he answered

them in the broad spirit of Jesus: "He that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law." "There is no distinction between Jew and Greek: for the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon him."

Like many another of our day, the man was larger than his philosophy. His great human heart was bound in iron bands of dogma; but, expanded by love, it constantly burst its fetters. Thus it is that Paul continually masquerades before us, a giant attired in a boy's coat, through the rents of which we catch frequent glimpses of the thews and sinews of a grand humanity.

Surely, by the faults and failures of our leaders we should learn, as well as by their virtues and successes. And this, I think, is the lesson of Paul's life to us. The little rill of love that rises in every heart has infinitude for its source: it comes from God. Being infinite, it cannot be bound with bands or limited by creeds. Its mission is to spread abroad over the parched and weary earth, and cause the desert to blossom as the rose. It is the still water that stagnates, not the laughing, rippling brook which goes leaping down the mountain side to spend its freshness upon all who need.

"'Tis when the rose is wrapped in many a fold,
Close to its heart the worm lies, wasting there its life and
beauty."

You remember Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner,"—how the sailor, with his cross-bow, shot the unoffending Albatross, thus violating the law of

universal love, and so brought destruction upon the ship. His comrades tied the dead body of the bird about his neck ; and there it hung like lead, weighing him down, while he, rebellious, repented not of the deed. But at last, after long days and nights of suffering, becalmed in the Tropics, he saw the water-snakes, in many a gay color, swim about the ship :—

“ Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire :
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam ; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

“ O happy living things ! no tongue
Their beauty might declare :
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware !
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware ! ”

In the might of that newly awakened love, the Albatross fell from his neck, and sank into the sea ; the evil spirits lost their power to harm him, and the ship was driven homeward. The lesson of the poem is in its closing stanzas :—

“ Farewell, farewell ! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest !
He prayeth well who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

“ He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small ;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.”

And now we close our service, and part for a little time. With what better message can I take leave of you than the message of love spoken by Jesus, iterated by Paul, and reiterated by the English poet? The doors of this church will be shut, but the doors of God's church stand ever open. The pulpit will be empty to-morrow, and no voice of earthly preacher will lead you in praise and prayer; but the pulpit of God is the blue arch of heaven, and his voice is never silent. In bird and tree and flower, in waving grass and ripening grain, in whispering zephyrs through the leaves, in rains and dews and mists, and in a myriad glittering worlds o'erhead, each dowered like this, God himself shall preach to you, and waft his message of love to every heart. You shall find

"Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything."

And in the presence of that divine beauty spread all abroad, perceiving in all that oneness of life which makes us one with all and one with Him, shall not our hearts respond with the prayer of love, remembering,—

"He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all"?

SUCCESS.

“What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”—MATT. xvi., 26.

“THERE is nothing so successful as success.” Such was Napoleon’s celebrated dictum; but was he successful? Of obscure birth, by force of will he overcame all obstacles, and rose to be emperor of a mighty nation, and conqueror of the world. He made and unmade kings. The nations trembled at his frown. His path of progress was a path of woe. He piled hecatomb upon hecatomb. The earth was steeped in blood, and the rivers thereof ran tears. He was merciless and pitiless to friend and foe alike. He prated of patriotism, but the noble rage of the patriot was to him a thing unknown. His cry was “France!” but his thought was self. Swollen with ambition, puffed up with pride, a very incarnation of evil, for a brief space he bestrode the earth like a Colossus,—then fell, and grovelled, and died so meanly that there were none so mean as to do him reverence. Was this success,—to be a king of kings, and a slave to ambition; to mount like Lucifer to the zenith, and to fall like him to the pit; to live the life of a tiger, and die the death of a dog?

Under the gilded dome of Les Invalides, I stood above the tomb of this butcher of Europe, and read upon its portal these words, traced by his dying hand: "I desire that my remains may repose on the banks of the Seine, among the French people whom I have loved so well."

"Whom I have loved so well!" Oh, petty and false even in death! His latest breath a lie! Who poured the blood of France like water to glut his selfish ambition, now to prate of his *love* for the French people! Surely, a fitting climax to an ignoble career. Rest in thy gilded infamy. As thy life was dishonorable and thy death despicable, so is thy grave contemptible. Ay, "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

But not on the tented field alone is Fame pursued by mad ambition. She dwells in cloisters, and weaves in her tresses the live buds of peace. Once she was taken by force, but now she is wooed with subtlety. The pen avails where the sword fails. The despised clerk of chivalry now leads the assault. Belles-lettres are the modern implements of war, and type-metal takes the place of lead. Among scholars, let us take Lord Bacon, and consider if his career, brilliant as it was, merits the verdict of "success."

Endowed by nature with an extraordinary intellect, born to wealth and position, his natural gifts fostered and advanced by careful education,—he became the greatest philosopher of Europe, and his words are household oracles to this day. Yet, so little was he in soul that, sitting as Lord High

Chancellor of England, he accepted bribes, sold justice, and died in disgrace. Well might the poet Pope write,—

“If parts allure thee, think how Bacon shined,
The wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind!”

To acquire wealth—is this success? Judging by the mad clamor therefor, and the eager rush of the multitudes, the mass of mankind must consider money the supreme good. Let us take a representative life here, also,—the life of the miser, whose God is gold,—and apply the test.

It has become proverbial that he who saves rather than he who makes becomes wealthy. The secret of wealth is, “Get all you can, and keep all you get.” This is the miser’s maxim. He hoards and he pinches. He goes without fire, he lives on a crust, and he dresses in rags, that he may add one more coin to his store. He trembles at every sound, and dies daily a thousand deaths, in fear of robbery. His gold is his only joy, and that joy is his bane. His heart is steeled against love, tenderness, and compassion; for the exercise of these would deplete his treasury. So, he lives solitary and alone; as the opprobrious title of miser implies, utterly, hopelessly miserable. Alas! how sad it is to think that the expansion of a bank account so frequently gauges exactly the contraction of a soul. And so he dies,—dies clutching at the gold which slips from his stiffening grasp; dies, and leaves that paltry treasure for which he has bartered every

joy here, every hope hereafter ; leaves it to be squandered by those who cared nothing for him, and for whom he cared not. Is such a life successful ? Though he has attained the wealth of Croesus, I think you will agree with me that it is not ; for “ what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? ”

“ Ah,” cries the voluptuary, “ you are right ! Power, fame, wealth, are but bubbles. Effort results only in friction. ‘ Much study is a weariness of the flesh.’ ‘ Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.’ Pleasure is the only good. ‘ Let us eat and drink ; for to-morrow we die.’ ”

Such is the Epicurean philosophy which accords well with man’s natural indolence and love of pleasure. But is a life of selfish ease a successful life ? Let us see.

The sensualist virtually abdicates his manhood, and becomes a beast ; for every sensual appetite is common to the beast and man. He eats the daintiest food, and drinks the richest wines, and gives free rein to his passions. He pampers his body, but he starves his soul. And, when the hour of death draws nigh, what has he to show as the result of life ? A body prematurely drained of its physical strength ; a mind debilitated through excesses ; a soul dwarfed, defrauded, debauched. Is this success ? He has lived a life of pleasure, he says ; but where is the ultimate gain ? “ What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? ”

Power, fame, wealth, pleasure,—these are the baubles for which men spend their lives. He is pronounced successful who attains to them, and he unsuccessful who has them not. Yet that judgment is false ; all these may unite in a single life, and yet that life be a failure. We need not leave our own country or our own time for such an example. We are all familiar with the career of a man who succeeded in youth to a position of tremendous power, and practically unlimited wealth, as proprietor of the leading American newspaper. That power and that wealth he has devoted to winning for himself fame and pleasure. His name is familiar to every ear the world over. There is no dissipation that he has not sounded to the depths. Yet I doubt if James Gordon Bennett is a happy man. Do power, and wealth, and notoriety, and dissipation fill the yearnings of his heart? Does he feel that his life thus far has been a success? I doubt it ; for the human heart demands something more than this, and conscience continually questions, “What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

If the possession of these things does not necessarily imply success, then the non-possession of them does not necessarily imply failure. It was wittily remarked in one of our city journals, some years ago, that, while Emerson the philosopher made only twenty-five dollars a week with his head, his namesake, Emerson the negro minstrel, made twenty-five hundred dollars a week with his heels. Yet

who shall say that the clog-dancer was more successful than the philosopher? Which, think you, was the more successful,—Jesus the wanderer, who had not where to lay his head, forsaken by his followers, scourged and crucified; or imperial Cæsar, clothed in purple, emperor of the world? The whole question turns upon this, What constitutes success? But, in order to answer this question, we must first decide for what purpose were we created. In the divine intention, what is the object of human life?

We are all agreed that man is immortal, for on no other hypothesis can the seeming inconsistencies of life be harmonized:—

“’Tis not the whole of life to live:
Nor all of death to die.”

If, then, eternity is ours, all our theories of life here must be based upon the relation of this life to that greater life beyond. Then, only that is success here which is success there. Power we leave behind us; wealth we cannot carry; fame is silent in the tomb; pleasure avails not in the courts of death. What acquisition, then, has life to offer by which the soul shall be permanently enriched? Of what superscription is the coin current of the grave?

As the soul is immaterial, so the wealth it bears must be immaterial. All the holy emotions upon which it feeds,—friendship, love, purity, truth, and the like,—these are its gain here, its treasure beyond. All that tends in this life to ennoble,

develop, and strengthen the soul, fitting it for that life beyond, is so much real gain, and the only real gain. This, I think, is what Jesus meant when he said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

And yet, you will say, it were not well to wholly despise the prizes of this world. Power is good, if rightly used. Fame may be honestly won, and worthily worn. Money is an absolute need to provide food, and shelter, and covering, and a thousand necessities of life. Though "man shall not live by bread alone," yet he must have bread.

This is true; and far be it from me to decry any honorable effort for worldly advancement; far be it from me to depreciate these things. They are all good in their place. I only argue that, in themselves, they do not and cannot constitute success. They may be, and often are, valuable adjuncts to success. The powerful, the famous, the wealthy, the lovers of pleasure, frequently are successful; but this is not because of these things, but in addition thereto. They are successful because, while not despising the prizes of earth, they are not wholly bound by them; but, aspiring upward, they seek and win also the higher prizes of the soul. I firmly believe, with James, that "every good gift and every perfect boon is from above, coming down from the Father of

lights." It is not that these things are evil in themselves, but that we make an evil use of them. We are but stewards of God's bounty. Everything we have is a trust for which we are accountable. Alas! too often we forget this, and, like Israel in the desert, we suffer our selfish greed to slay us with the good gifts he sends.

To sum up the whole matter, I consider that true success in life does not depend upon so-called worldly success. The question is not, "How are you getting on; what is your worldly position and worldly fortune?" but, "Are you developing your soul? Are you day by day growing nobler, purer, truer, and more helpful to your fellow-men? Are you laying up treasures in heaven, and storing wealth against your passage there? Is the fame of your good deeds known to the angels, and do the saints tell of your charities done in secret?" If this is so, then are you truly successful, though in life you be pinched with hunger and clothed in rags. But if it is not, though you have the power of an autocrat, the wealth of the Indies; though your name be emblazoned on the scrolls of fame, and every pleasure of the world be yours,—yet are your gains a delusion, and your life a failure. "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

SPECIAL JUDGMENTS AND SPECIAL PROVIDENCES.

"Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and killed them, think ye that they were offenders above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."—LUKE xiii., 4, 5.

Not long ago, at Ischia, a small island in the Bay of Naples, a vast multitude were assembled one evening in the theatre, witnessing a play, when a violent earthquake demolished the building, and three thousand persons perished. A week or so later, at Rochester, Minn., a cyclone destroyed the town, in ten minutes wrecking the results of many years' labor, mangling and crushing to death a large number of the inhabitants.

These are but examples of occurrences constantly happening in the world. Hardly a day passes but the newspapers chronicle fearful disasters to life and property through agencies other than human. The earth opens her mouth to engulf, the tempest devastates, the lightning strikes, epidemics ravage; and man is the victim.

In civilized communities, the custom prevails, when human life is sacrificed by violence, to impanel a jury, and endeavor to discover, first, the perpetrator

of such violence, and, second, the reason thereof; namely, whether it is the result of wilful malice or unavoidable accident. And we, assembled here to-day, sit in this capacity of jurors, holding an inquest upon the bodies of these our fellows, destroyed by violence; and our right and our duty is to question by whom or by what power they were destroyed, and, if blame attaches, to denounce the guilty without fear and without favor.

We are agreed that, in both the cases cited, the victims perished through agencies other than human, and, therefore, that no human being is to blame. We are agreed, further, that the agents of destruction were what are commonly termed natural forces, or forces of nature. Thus we know by observation that this earth upon which we live is a ball of fire, slightly cooled, and crusted over upon the surface, but so slightly that the seething flames beneath may at any moment, and do frequently, burst forth; that, in vast depressions upon this cooled surface, vapors have condensed to form oceans of water; that water, coming in contact with fire, is again resolved into vapor or steam; that such steam is expansive, and seeks an outlet, possessing force to a degree practically irresistible. If, then, the waters of ocean should find a vent, and come in contact with the subterranean fires, steam must be generated by such contact and conflict of the elements; and this, through expansive force, seeking an outlet, will convulse the crust of the earth, rupture it, and cause what is known as an earthquake. This is what

probably occurred at Ischia; and hence the fall of the theatre and the resultant loss of life.

Again, the atmosphere which we breathe, and upon which all life depends, is an invisible envelope of elastic, ponderable fluid, completely surrounding the earth, most dense at its surface, and growing gradually rarer as it recedes. This fluid has been analyzed, and consists, as is well known, of two gases, oxygen and nitrogen, in the proportions, roughly speaking, of one-fifth oxygen and four-fifths nitrogen. This fluid, being elastic, naturally seeks a vacuum, and rushes thereto with irresistible force. Thus if, through contraction of cold or any other cause, a vacuum occurs in any quarter of the atmospheric belt, the air from other quarters rushes at once to fill that vacuum and restore the equilibrium. The greater the emergency, the greater the speed. Hence, the gentle zephyr which fans your cheek; hence, the trade-wind which brings the good ship merrily homeward; hence, the dreadful cyclone, which mows the forest like a swath, which levels towns, and maims and kills the terror-stricken inhabitants.

Thus it will be seen, first, that these effects spring from natural causes; second, that they are not the result of special legislation, but of primary laws.

For example, earthquakes occur where no inhabitants exist; cyclones spend their rage on forest and prairie far from human habitation. Then, surely, it is reasonable to suppose that the late earthquake at Ischia would have occurred just the same, had no

town occupied the island, and had no multitude been assembled in the public theatre; that the cyclone in Minnesota would have occurred just the same if Rochester had never been built. Neither earthquake nor cyclone went out of its way to destroy property or life, neither did it vary from its course to avoid such destruction. The lightning flash which recently killed a young man in a neighboring town, sleeping peacefully in his bed, was hardly aimed at him by some superior power, as a hunter aims a shaft at bird on roost or rabbit in her lair. The bolt obeyed a fixed law, and, controlled by circumstances, would have struck, though the house had been tenantless. Had the electric fluid found a conductor to the ground, such as a lightning-rod, or even a metal spout, it would, through an inherent law, have followed such conductor, have expended its force in the earth, and the young man would to-day, in all human probability, be alive and well.

I know that this line of argument is opposed to all the theories of orthodox belief. That belief teaches that a Supreme Power, all-wise and all-good, holds the winds and the waves, the earthquakes and the lightnings, in the hollow of his hand, and arbitrarily directs their force to heal or to destroy, at his good pleasure. But, if the weight of evidence proved this to be the fact,—which it does not,—then, in view of the constant afflictions showered upon mankind, the wanton destruction of life and property, entailing sorrow and suffering unspeakable upon those left behind, there would be but one possible

conclusion at which we could arrive, and that would be that we are governed by a malignant devil who delights in torturing us, and not by a beneficent God who seeks our welfare. This is the necessary outcome of the orthodox doctrine of special judgments and special providences ; and, granting the premises, there is no escaping the conclusion.

But, as I have said, the evidence is all the other way. Even our orthodox friends must admit that there have been a thousand harmless earthquakes to one that did damage ; ten thousand cyclones on vacant sea or prairie to one in a populous district ; ten million innocent lightning flashes to one that took a life. And what does all this prove ? One of two things ; namely, either that special judgment is a myth, and fixed law the only law, or else that the efforts of a malignant power to injure us are usually vain.

But, assuming that these unfortunate occurrences are not the result of any special legislation on the part of a Superior Power, evil or good, but are, on the contrary, simply accidents in the working of a tremendous and complicated machine, the question arises, How far is the inventor and conductor of such machine liable for these accidents ? Are they practically unavoidable ? Is this universe arranged and conducted on the best possible plan ? Is its control absolute, or only limited ?

To answer these questions fully and satisfactorily, we must be possessed of knowledge transcending the human. But, granting this, we, the governed —

noting the apparent inaccuracies of government, and suffering therefrom — have every moral right to question and theorize both as to the nature of that government and its application. Notwithstanding the protest of timid minds, thinkers of all ages have so questioned and theorized, and have arrived at many answers, all different ; and hence the variety of sects, which are not in any case founded upon facts, but upon the opinion which some man has had concerning supposed facts. Thus, Calvin worshipped a hideous devil under the name of God. But this devil was not a fact,— it was only the chimera of his disordered brain ; and his followers perpetuate the same fanciful worship. We claim the same right which he exercised, of forming our own conclusions upon the evidence. Each must do this for himself. Your conclusion is not binding upon me, nor is my conclusion binding upon you ; but it is well to be able to give a reason why we think so and so. Therefore, in the matter before us, I propose to tell you, not what I know to be so, but what I think to be so, and why I think it. If this agrees with your own opinion, you will accept it ; if not, you will reject it, giving yourself reasons why you reject it. In any case, it is but a theory, for we can only theorize about matters which are beyond our limit of knowledge.

In view of the conditions observable here on earth, I find but four theories of God and the universe worthy of serious consideration. They are these :—

First, that there is no God ; that this universe is

evolved out of chaos in obedience to blind, inherent law. (This is atheistic materialism.)

Second, that God exists, and is all-powerful; but he is not all-good. He is fickle and changeable, a compound of good and evil, or God and devil. (This corresponds to the Jehovah worship of ancient Israel.)

Third, that God exists, and is all-powerful, all-wise, and all-good. The inconsistencies of the universe are but apparent. All seeming discords are but parts of a divine harmony. (This is the modern orthodox Christian position.)

Fourth, that God exists, and is all-good, but is not all-powerful. He is subject to law, and is bound by law. (This states the tendency of modern radical thought.)

Now, treating these four theories in their order, I find the first — that there is no God — plausible; for, by this means, much that is strange and inconsistent on the face in our government is accounted for. If we are but fortuitous germs hatched into life by the heat of the sun, then the accident of our death is no more remarkable than the accident of our life.

But, on the other hand, I find opposed to this theory the evident design everywhere apparent in nature. The adaptability of parts to powers, of individual to individual, and of each to its environment. How could blind chance evolve the delicate mechanism of an eye, and harmonize the prevailing colors of nature thereto? How could unreasoning law evolve the wondrous system of floral fertiliza-

tion, and teach the bee and humming-bird to bear the life-giving pollen to distant plants? If the materialist says that it is hard to believe in a God, I answer that it is harder yet not to believe in a God. Unbelief is the most credulous of all beliefs.

The second theory,—that God is all-powerful, but not all-good,—I do not believe, since, to my mind, the evidences of his goodness so far outweigh and overbalance the possible evidences of his evil nature. The earthquake, the cyclone, and the lightning are, as we have seen, but manifestations of natural powers which usually work to the advantage of man, and only occasionally to his destruction. Because one year of famine occurs, shall man impeach the goodness of God, while the unfailing harvests of a thousand years cry shame on his ingratitude?

The third theory,—that God is all-powerful, all-wise, and all-good, and that seeming evil is only apparent, not real,—while appealing to my sympathies, seems equally untenable to my reason. The evils of life are real. It was a real evil that those three thousand unfortunates were crushed to death at Ischia, leaving a countless train of parents, wives, husbands, and little children, to mourn the loss of their dear ones. It was a real evil that the fair town of Rochester should be swept away, and her inhabitants destroyed, or rendered homeless. It was a real evil that that young man should be slain in the strength of his manhood, and the girl he loved be made a widow before she was a bride. To say that these are not evils is folly. They are real evils, and,

humanly speaking, they are great evils. True, we cannot see the whole circle: we can judge of good and evil only within the scope of our horizon; but it is our right so to judge. Our scales may not be balanced with divine nicety; but, as balanced, they declare such occurrences false coin, wholly at variance with the standard of justice and goodness. Therefore, if God is all-powerful, and deviates but one hair's breadth from the line of rectitude in his dealings with men, then he is not all-good.

We come now to consider the fourth theory,—that God is all-good, but not all-powerful; that he is subject to law, and bound by law. That God is bound by law is capable of proof. It is impossible for him to annul his own act. More than this, it is impossible for him to annul the act of his meanest creature. By a thunder-bolt, he might destroy this church and every creature therein at this moment; but he could not annul the fact that we met here this morning, I to speak, and you to hear. To all eternity, that fact remains; and God is powerless to remove it from the record. He might have prevented it, but, once having occurred, he cannot annul it. What does this prove? It proves simply that God is not all-powerful; that he is bound by law, the law of the fixity of past events. Then, if he is subject to and bound by one law, why not to others? He is in fact so. He is bound by every proved proposition of geometry. Two parallel straight lines, though infinitely extended, will not meet, and God is powerless to make them meet. The whole is equal to the

sum of its parts, and God cannot make it less or more.

The conclusion is obvious : though law be a creation of God, thenceforth law is omnipotent, and God is subject thereto as completely as is his meanest creature. It has been well said that "the unspoken word is my slave, but the spoken word is my king." And so of God. The law which rests in the divine consciousness only, unexpressed, is subject to the divine will ; but, once promulgated, and stamped upon the universe, God is the creature of his own law, and must obey it. God never changeth. His word abideth forever.

"Out of nothing, nothing comes." Out of matter, the Supreme Intelligence created this universe ; and it is fair to suppose that it is the best possible creation out of the material at hand. We know not what faults or inherent vices of composition may have existed in chaos ; we only know that the cosmos is not perfect. When the Divine Mind surrounded our globe with the atmospheric envelope, he made this an agent of life, yet left therein a possibility of death. When he gave water the power of expanding into steam, thus to grind our bread and weave our clothes, and bear us over land and sea, he made possible also the earthquake at Ischia. When he charged all nature with electricity, which carries our messages with the speed of thought, and which some claim is the long-sought principle of life, he freed also a fearful agent of death. Why the bitter and the sweet are thus mingled, we know not ; but is it

not reasonable to suppose, the prevalent bent being for good, that the Supreme Intelligence desires only good to man, and, limited by law, works ever toward the ultimate good? He does not interfere to prevent the working of a law, for he cannot. Given the necessary conditions, the earthquake engulfs, the cyclone devastates, and the lightning kills remorselessly. The evil and the good suffer the same fate. No prayers can avert, no piety can save. But in this very fixity of law, this very constancy of God, lies our safety. There is no such thing as special providence, but there is also no such thing as special judgment. The parting of the Jordan by Moses, and the slaying of the false priests by fire from heaven, are equally fables. No hand is stretched out to save Jesus, and none to punish Judas.

Yet, you will say, virtue is rewarded, and sin is punished, even in this world. Yes, but through fixed law, not by special legislation. Such reward and punishment are effects directly subject to the fixed law of cause and effect. If I sin, I suffer, and my suffering is the direct effect of the sin; and if I do well, I am repaid by my conscience, which approves, and that approving conscience is the effect of the righteous deed. But there is certainly no such thing as compensation or punishment through direct interposition of God.

I have chosen this subject for to-day because a recent orthodox journal, commenting upon the catastrophe at Ischia, pronounced it a judgment of God upon a sinful people. I count such a position simply

blasphemous ; and, professing, as the writer does, to be a follower of Jesus, I cannot see how he harmonizes such position with the emphatic declaration made by Jesus in our text : "Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and killed them, think ye that they were offenders above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem ? I tell you, Nay : but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

We are wont to consider death, and especially sudden death, as the greatest possible calamity ; yet this is not probably the fact. We believe that we are immortal. Then, rightly speaking, there is no death. What we call so is but a turn of the kaleidoscope. The death pang is probably no greater than many a pain we daily suffer unflinchingly. It is but a hedge that separates us from the life beyond. If we go in at the gate, we suffer not at all ; but, if rudely driven through the brambles by some untoward occurrence, the thorns will annoy us in passing. But, however we pass that hedge, we can but emerge into another phase of the life that we live here, the eternal life ; and there, as here, we shall dwell in God.

THE LAW OF LIBERTY.

“So speak ye, and so do, as men that are to be judged by a law of liberty.”—JAMES ii, 12.

LIBERTY is the word dearest to every American heart. We are never weary of telling how our ancestors, centuries ago, dared the dangers of the deep, landed on Plymouth Rock, founded this colony, and endured hardships without end,—all for liberty; and again how their descendants, true to the tradition of their blood, unfurled the flag of revolution, withstood oppression, and fought for liberty; and yet again how we, still later, affirmed the same grand principle, and, with a prodigal expenditure of blood and treasure, purchased for others that liberty which our forefathers had won for us. Thus it is that to-day only free men tread the soil of this continent. North, South, East, and West, look where you will, slavery is dead, and all are free.

Moreover, ours is not only a freedom in name, but a real freedom. We elect our own rulers, who are in fact our servants, and we compel them to do our bidding. We make our own laws, and we make them wide enough so they shall not unduly hamper us. Within the circle of those laws we roam at will, and, if we so desire, at the ballot-box we may enlarge that

circle. We have freedom of thought and freedom of speech wholly unlimited, and a freedom of action, also, bordering even upon license. So comprehensive, indeed, is this freedom of ours, that the most visionary republican of a century ago would have pronounced the scheme thereof Utopian. Thus, it was a favorite saying at the court of George III. that "the people are wholly incapable of self-government." And the blue laws of New England attest the fact that even the victorious revolutionists believed liberty a dangerous article, liable to explode, and therefore to be confined in narrow limits, and bound with iron bands.

How could they think otherwise, when theology had traced the generation of man back to the devil, and found the race radically and hopelessly corrupt? But this view has been modified. We are persuaded to-day that good, and not evil, is the fount of being; that God, and not the devil, breathed into the nostrils of primal man the breath of life. We believe that the vital spark is a divine spark, which may indeed be neglected, stifled, perhaps extinguished, but is also capable of expansion and intensification into the flame of a divine righteousness. This is why collective man to-day trusts individual man with so large a liberty of action. This is why the blue laws have been repealed, and the fires of religious persecution extinguished. This is why you and I are free to think and speak and act as we will, provided only that we respect the same rights in others; for this is the sole limitation upon our

liberty of action, and herein the law enforces only what natural religion dictates. When Moses, three thousand years ago, told the Hebrews, or the legislature of Massachusetts to-day enacts, "Thou shalt do no murder," "Thou shalt not steal," "Thou shalt not commit adultery," "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor," — he and they have but re-enacted the Golden Rule, which God dictated to men on the morning of creation, "Do as ye would be done by," which Golden Rule the law-makers and sages of all times and countries have ever since been repeating after him.

But our human laws are aimed only at gross violations of this divine rule, and do not enter into the subtle spirit thereof. Thus we may easily comply with human law while transgressing divine law. We may refrain from killing, yet, through hatred of an enemy, before God be murderers. We may avoid the penalty for theft, and yet, through covetousness or fraud, be morally guilty of the crime. The impure eye brands the soul, though the life be outwardly correct. Though uncondemned for perjury, a word, a gesture even, may wrongfully defame our neighbor.

We find, therefore, two circles of law encompassing us. The outer and larger is the human law, so large and so loose that only the absolutely lawless need care ever to pass its bound. The inner and smaller is the divine law, so close and perfect in its adjustment that ever the best of us are daily restrained by it, or daily break through it. For this circle of

divine law, which closes us in on every side, is frail as gossamer; and there are no police to protect it, no grand jury to indict for its violation, no State's attorney to prosecute, no courts and no prisons to enforce it. God is wholly without representation. No man shall hinder us. If any expostulate, we may tell him to mind his own affairs, we shall do as we please. The divine law is but a cobweb, and we may brush it aside at will. Yes, such is our liberty of action. We are free to violate it at every point. We may rend it into fragments and cast it from us with contempt; and yet God is not mocked! Not the smallest strand of that web is broken with impunity, that circle is not passed — no, not even by a hair's breadth — without punishment.

Does any one dispute this, let him recall some instance wherein he knowingly transgressed the divine law. Any offence will answer the purpose of illustration, and none of us need have far to look. It may have been a falsehood wilfully told; it may have been a fraud committed in business; it may have been some other secret fault. But, whatever the transgression, I ask, first, Were you not, in relation thereto, a free agent, to act or to refrain at your pleasure? True, the temptation may have been great, but could you not have resisted? Had the act been punishable by fine or imprisonment, and had officers stood by ready to arrest you on the instant, would you have done it? I think you will agree with me that you would not. But, in the case before us, only God's law was violated, and only

your own conscience witnessed the violation. It seemed safe and pleasant so to do, and you followed the bent of your inclination. There was no protest, no interference on behalf of a divine power. With full liberty of action, you chose your course, and acted without molestation. Now, I ask you, second, Have you escaped punishment?

I think there can be but one answer to this question; namely, that a heavy punishment has followed the transgression. There has been a loss of self-respect; a consciousness of degradation, in that you have fallen below your standard of manhood, and have allowed brute impulse to triumph over godlike reason, causing you to violate a law which was not guarded, but left wholly to your honor for observance. You have not since been able to look your own soul in the face, and feel yourself quite as good a man.

Then there has been the dread of discovery, the fear that your fault might be detected, the forecasting of shame which must follow such detection: to be branded with dishonor by your acquaintances; to have men feel that they could not depend upon you; to know that the low and the vicious, whom you despise, would claim you as one of themselves; that the high and noble must reject you as unworthy. All this has been yours in thought, though no soul has shared your secret. So your eye must waver, your tongue falter, and your hand-clasp be less free when greeting your friends on the street; for "Conscience doth make cowards of us all."

Yet it is quite possible that you have felt none of this: you may have done the wrong act as a matter of course, and thought no more about it. But does it follow from this that you have escaped punishment? I think not. Your insensibility betokens rather a more dreadful punishment than any I have indicated. The disease which exhibits itself in outward eruption is the more easily detected, and therefore the more easily cured; but the disease which attacks the vitals makes no outward sign, yet is certain death. There are fearful maladies which so saturate the system that no fresh exposure produces an impression. So he who suffers no inconvenience from the perpetration of a wrong act proves only that he is morally corrupt. And I leave it to you, What worse fate can happen to the body than that it shall become vitiated by an incurable disease? What worse punishment can be meted out to the soul than that it shall become chronically depraved? And, whether base or noble, beautiful or horrible, the soul of each is his own creation. Minute by minute, hour by hour, and day by day, through thought and word and act, each moulds himself. Then, is it not a solemn question for each of us, Have I, in the past week, the past month, the past year or ten years, lost or gained ground? .

For as the body is never stationary, but with every pulse changes some of its constituent particles, rejecting and replacing the worn-out atoms, so the soul is not stationary, but constantly progresses or retrogrades upon the path of virtue.

Thus it is that we hear so often questioned regarding some acquaintance, "What is wrong with him? He does not look one in the eye, as formerly; or, if he does, his gaze has lost its wonted frankness of expression."

There is indeed something wrong with him. Some secret sin is slowly but surely undermining his moral constitution, and sapping his manhood. He may hide it in his heart of hearts, but the tell-tale blood will write it on his brow. He may brave the opinion of men, and, like Hester Prynne upon the scaffold, flaunt the token of shame as a badge of victory; but he cannot thereby daunt God, or escape the lash of offended Justice; for his own soul is the avenger, and his own hands fashion the whips.

Therefore, my brothers, is not this text, written so long ago, an apt injunction, which we will do well to heed? "So speak ye, and so do, as men that are to be judged by a law of liberty."

Are we not indeed free? Each one of us may, if he choose, on leaving this church, plunge at once into the vilest sin. Even now, the wrongful thought may be sapping the energies of the soul. Before the door is reached, a slanderous word may defame your neighbor, but still more defame yourself. Each is a sculptor, and his thought, his word, and his act are the tools with which he works, constantly modelling his own soul. That soul is yourself, your undying self. It shall live when this body which you so much prize has long been dissipated and mingled with the elements. The sun shall fade

away, the moon and stars be lost in endless night ; but this remains, and remains as you create it. Then, how shall it remain,— little, mean, contemptible, distorted with passion and honey-combed with sin, or great, grand, noble, true, the majestic embodiment of a glorious ideal conceived by you here on earth, and wrought out with patience and perseverance during this your earth life, under “a law of liberty” ?

WHY AM I A UNITARIAN ?

"Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."—ROM. xiv., 5.

I WANT you to consider with me two questions : First, Why am I a Unitarian ? Second, Does Unitarianism stand for any principle which we, as Unitarians, are bound to support and defend ?

As an introduction to my subject, I desire to emphasize the difference between religion and theology, which difference I consider very important to be understood. To this end, I will give you a brief definition of each, and then endeavor to explain the definition :—

1. Religion is a man's disposition toward his spiritual surrounding. 2. Theology is a man's attempted description of his spiritual surrounding.

You will please to bear in mind that the spiritual surrounding here mentioned includes all spiritual existence, both in and out of the body : God, as well as man ; living men and women, as well as those who have passed away ; for living men and women are but spirits clothed in flesh. Let us consider the definition of religion first : Religion is a man's disposition toward his spiritual surrounding.

You will see from this definition that there may

be both good and bad religions, as there are good and bad dispositions. So there may be all grades of goodness or badness in religion. All that is needed to make a religion is the recognition of a spiritual surrounding, and some kind of a disposition toward that surrounding. A man may hate or fear or love his spiritual surrounding and his religion will be a religion of hate, a religion of fear, or a religion of love, as the case may be.

No race of men has ever been found wholly without religion; that is, no race of men has ever been found who did not recognize the spiritual side of nature, and assume some mental attitude toward the same. How could it be otherwise? The veriest savage feels that there dwells in his body a something which is wholly invisible, yet directs the body's movements. His observation teaches him that similar invisible powers inhabit the bodies of not only all human beings, but of all living creatures. Hence, he argues that every object in nature, large or small, animal, vegetable, or mineral, has its indwelling spirit. This is the first step in religion, the recognition of a spiritual surrounding. Now, how shall he regard all these other spirits? Shall he hate them, fear them, or love them? So soon as he decides this question, he has a religion, and it is a religion of hate, of fear, or of love. There is not much to choose between the religions of hate and fear, for they are about equally low in the scale. The religion of love is the highest form of religion; and the more ardent and comprehensive his affec-

tion, the more truly religious is the man. A disposition of universal benevolence marks the truly religious man.

“ He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small.”

This, then, is what I mean when I say that religion is a man's disposition toward his spiritual surrounding.

Let us now consider our definition of theology : Theology is a man's attempted description of his spiritual surrounding.

We have seen that the savage feels in himself a spirit, and by observation is led to believe that a similar spirit inhabits every visible object. He believes, further, that these spirits can exist independent of the material objects in which they dwell ; but, in or out of the object, they are not apparent to his senses. He cannot see, hear, smell, taste, or touch them. How, then, shall he describe them ? There is but one way, and that is by imagining what they are like. But it is impossible for him to imagine a form such as he has never seen, therefore he usually describes spirits as of similar form to the bodies in which they dwell. The spirit of a man he thinks of in the form of a man ; the spirit of a lion, in the form of a lion ; the spirit of a bird, in the form of a bird, and so on. Or he may imagine a form composed of parts of all these united : the head of a man on the body of a lion, with the wings of an eagle ; and he may picture the disembodied

spirit in this form. But, whatever his imagination, it can only be a picture of some one thing, or of a union of several things, which he has seen. The human mind has no power to originate even the simplest form.

Having imagined a spiritual form, he now imagines spiritual attributes. And here, again, he has no power of origination; he can imagine no attribute of which he is not himself conscious, or sees exhibited in others. Therefore, he describes the disembodied spirit as possessing the same nature that it manifested while in the body, or else the same nature that he feels in himself. He thinks of his dead enemy as still vindictive, of the dead lion as still ferocious, of the dead fawn as still gentle and timid.

In like manner, he pictures to himself the spirits of the sky, the sun, the moon, the ocean, the whirlwind, and the fire. Usually, he attributes to such spirits human attributes; and, believing that they have both power and disposition to harm him or help him, he offers them sacrifice, prays to them, and worships them. Thus the religion of the savage is known as Polytheism, or the worship of many spirits or gods.

Now, it will be borne in mind that, never having seen these spirits, his description of their several forms is pure imagination; also, that his description of their several natures is only an inference. He argues, "The lion is ferocious, therefore the spirit of the lion is ferocious; the whirlwind destroys, there-

fore the spirit of the whirlwind is destructive ; the sun warms, therefore the spirit of the sun is kind." This imaginary description of the spirits by which he feels himself surrounded, and of their natures, is the theology of the savage ; and this is what I mean when I say in the definition that theology is a man's attempted description of his spiritual surrounding.

As the savage progresses in civilization,—that is, as his mind expands and develops through observation and experience, personal and inherited,—he realizes a vast unity in nature. He sees that all things are dependent on each other, and seem to form a harmonious whole. Thus, the earth brings forth vegetable life, which goes to support animal life, which in its turn renews the earth again and feeds the vegetable kingdom ; and from this reflection the idea gradually develops of one Supreme Spirit, which comprehends within itself all the minor spirits of the universe. And, so soon as this conception is firmly fixed in his mind, he is become a Monotheist, or worshipper of one God. This is our theological position to-day.

We Unitarians, like all other religious denominations, have a theology, or attempted description of our spiritual surrounding. We describe God as one, all-pervading and all-enfolding, comprehending all visible and invisible forms. We attribute to him a nature of transcendent excellence, made up of those qualities which we most admire in man,—love, mercy, justice, and the like. This conception of the unity and perfection of the Supreme Spirit has been

affirmed and is still affirmed so persistently by our denomination, as the most reasonable conception of him possible to finite minds, that we have gained the title of "Unitarians," or believers in the oneness of God. Yet, in simple truth, we are bound to admit that our theology, like every other, is only an imaginary description of the Divine. It is but an inference derived from observation of the universe about us. For my part, I am free to admit that I am utterly at a loss to define God. I seem to feel a vast spiritual power about me, toward which my spirit aspires, and which seems at times to respond thereto; and this I call "God." But what this power is I do not know. The Unitarian description of it may be right. The Trinitarian description of it may be right. The Hindu description of it may be right. I do not know which is right, and I care but little; for all descriptions thereof seem to me equally vain, being all purely imaginative. I choose the Unitarian description because it seems to me most reasonable of all, but I do not value it. Emerson says, "If you define God, he ceases to be God." I do not care to define him. It is enough for me to feel that there is a power superior to myself, which makes for righteousness. You may name it "trinity" or "unity"; you may say there is one God or ten million Gods,—I care not. You do not know, and I do not know. These are but inventions of the imagination; these are but weeds which choke religion; these are but quibbles about names. I feel simply that *God is*, and there I rest.

So much for our Unitarian theology. But Unitarianism is something more than a vain theology, an imaginative description of what no one knows or can know anything about: it is a theory of religion. You will notice that I say it is a theory of religion, not that it is a religion. Religion is a purely individual thing. We, believing in the same theory of religion, band together to form a society, and call ourselves "Unitarians." A number of others, believing in a different theory of religion, band together, and call themselves "Roman Catholics." Still others, believing in a yet different theory of religion, band together, and call themselves "Orthodox." Yet there is no distinctive "Unitarian," "Roman Catholic," or "Orthodox" religion, for each person in each society has his own individual religion. For example: Here are one hundred persons gathered together, all holding the same theory of religion, which they name the "Unitarian" theory. But there are just as many different religions represented here as there are persons present; that is, each one here exhibits a different disposition toward his spiritual surrounding, toward God and man. A may live in constant fear of his spiritual surrounding, then his will be a religion of fear; B may hate his spiritual surrounding, then his will be a religion of hate; C may love his spiritual surrounding, then his will be a religion of love; and so on throughout the whole assemblage. Yet we all accept the Unitarian theory of religion, and call ourselves Unitarians.

So, you see, a theory of religion may be social, but religion itself is individual. The Episcopalian theory is the established theory of religion in England; but every Englishman has his own individual religion, and regulates his life thereby.

"But," you will say, "if this is the case, what does it matter where I attend church, or to what special theory of religion I subscribe? My individual religion will be the same, whatever theory I hold."

There I think you are wrong. The theory of religion you hold will certainly affect your religion for good or evil. If you have a bad theory of religion, it will lower the tone of your religious life. If you have a good theory, it will tend to ennoble it. I can best explain this by comparing several different theories. We will begin with the Roman Catholic, which is the oldest, or Mother Church, from which all the others spring:—

I. The Roman Catholic theology teaches the existence of three Gods, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, distinct, and yet united,—“trinity in unity.”

Its theory of religion is that, through the sin of Adam, the human race became depraved, and hence all men were justly condemned to eternal punishment; that God the Son descended to earth, took upon himself the human form, and suffered death as a sacrifice for all those who should accept the same through the proper channel,—that is, the Roman Catholic Church; that his merits, and those of the saints and martyrs, constitute an inexhaustible treas-

ury for the cancellation of sin ; that the pope is the only representative of God on earth, and has sole power to apportion these merits and forgive sins, remitting all punishment both here and hereafter ; that the pope and his successors in office are infallible in judgment, and cannot err ; that unquestioning submission to clerical authority is the duty of the people.

II. The Protestant Churches hold precisely the same theology as the Roman Catholic : three Gods in one,—“trinity in unity.”

Their theory of religion is the same, only they deny the authority of the pope, and substitute an infallible book, the Bible, for an infallible church. They teach that God only can forgive sin, and that the sole condition of salvation is faith in Christ and the acceptance of his atonement. The several sects differ from each other only in minor details of theology and ritual. All agree that faith alone is to be exercised in religious matters : reason must be held in abeyance.

III. The Unitarian theology maintains the absolute unity of the universe ; the existence of One Eternal Spirit, without form, comprehending all visible and invisible objects.

The Unitarian theory of religion is that, under the guidance of this beneficent Ruling Power, the human race has ascended from lower conditions to its present mental and moral status ; that the limit is not yet reached, but that we are still ascending ; that life is unending, and progression infinite ; that

love is the noblest quality in either God or man, and love for all the highest form of religion; that sin is transgression of law, and punishment the natural consequence of such transgression; that each man by his own acts moulds his own destiny, and that a vicarious atonement for sin is impossible; that reason is the only arbiter of all questions, religious or otherwise, and conscience the only rule of action.

I have thus briefly stated the three principal systems of theology and theories of religion held to-day in the Christian world. I say the three principal systems and theories; for, though the professors of Unitarianism are but a handful as compared with those of the other two, yet the principles of Unitarianism are widely distributed. Had we power to canvass the hearts and consciences of men, disregarding the professions of their lips, I firmly believe we might count our communion by hundreds of millions, instead of by paltry thousands. Millions upon millions of our brethren throughout the world have never entered a Unitarian church nor heard a Unitarian sermon. Millions upon millions of Unitarians do not comprehend what Unitarianism is, or even know that they are such. Millions upon millions of Trinitarians are year by year being educated into Unitarianism, as I myself was educated, solely through the extravagance and absurdity of Trinitarian teaching, without a single Unitarian influence, without reading a Unitarian book, without hearing a Unitarian sermon, or even knowing the meaning of the word. Yes, we are few in numbers, but our in-

fluence is great. Unitarianism is "the little leaven which is leavening the whole lump."

I ask you now to consider with me the first question which I put in opening, Why am I a Unitarian?

First, because the Roman Catholic and Protestant theology of three Gods which are only one, and one God which is in fact three, conveys no definite idea to my mind. It is an unintelligible jumble of words, wholly contradictory, and therefore utter nonsense. Either there is only one God, indivisible, or else there are three distinct Gods. Brought up in the Episcopal faith, I imbibed the idea of three distinct Gods in the form of men,—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This idea I have outgrown, and have exchanged it for the Unitarian idea of One Supreme Power, without form, indivisible, and comprehending all things. I accept this conception of God, because it seems to me the more reasonable. Of course, I do not know that it is correct; for, as I told you in opening, all theology is but an attempted description, founded solely on imagination and inference.

Second, I am a Unitarian because I regard the Trinitarian theories of religion as not only false, but absolutely pernicious. I count the Roman Catholic theory of an infallible pope and the Protestant theory of an infallible Bible as equally untrue in fact and equally injurious in effect. But, above all, I regard the doctrine of "vicarious atonement" as absolutely immoral, and directly tending to the increase of crime. That doctrine teaches that the

most evil life may be washed clean, even at the last moment, in the blood of Christ, if the offender will but repent and accept the divine atonement. An Episcopalian lady lately told me that, as she understands this doctrine, "a man may lead the most criminal life possible, and, being condemned for murder, may repent upon the scaffold, accept the atonement, and pass at once into the joys of heaven. His victim may have lived a most moral and meritorious life, but, being struck down suddenly, without opportunity to repent and accept the atonement, passes at once into hell, there to remain eternally without hope of escape." She said, "I know that this doctrine is not reasonable, it is not common sense; but my church teaches it, and therefore I believe it." Brought up in the same church, and taught the same doctrine, I agree with her that it is not reasonable and is not common sense; but, unlike her, I deny the authority of any church to teach such a monstrous doctrine. I reject that doctrine as wholly unworthy of belief; I denounce it as immoral, — as placing a premium upon crime, and as unfit for publication in any civilized community.

Third, I am a Unitarian because, while rejecting this theory of vicarious atonement, I accept the Unitarian doctrine, that each man moulds his own destiny; that the soul enters the next life as it leaves this, and that its condition there will depend wholly upon its action here; that imputed sin is a fable, and vicarious atonement a myth; that the earthly ideal of justice approximates the divine jus-

tice, and by the rule of absolute justice, in the light of all the circumstances, shall we be judged.

I have already said that the Unitarian theology of One Supreme Spirit, all-pervading, all-enfolding, absolutely without form, and indivisible, commends itself to my mind as the most reasonable of all theologies. This is the God I worship. But, while loving and worshipping the majestic unity of God which comprehends all, I must not forget my duties owed to the individual spirits dwelling within that unity and surrounding me upon every side. For we have found that religion is not only a man's disposition toward God, the Supreme Spirit, but also his disposition toward men, his fellow-spirits. He is not truly religious who loves God as a whole, yet hates his fellow-man ; for his fellow-man is a part of God. How can I claim to truly love my friend, if I hate one of his limbs, and strive constantly to injure it? The truly religious man must find the God in every object, and feel only love for every object, be it friend or foe. This, I take it, is what the apostle John meant when he wrote, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." This, also, it seems to me, is what Jesus meant when he taught the Pharisees that God is the Father of men ; that love to man is quite as necessary to a religious life as love to God ; that the second cannot exist without the first, and, if love to man is lacking, pretended love to God is but rank hypocrisy.

Fourth, I am a Unitarian because I believe reason to be the greatest gift from God to man. Who

would not rather lose fortune, bodily health, even life itself, than to become insane? And I believe reason, not faith, to be the divinely appointed arbiter of truth; conscience, the only rule of action.

Fifth, I am a Unitarian because this denomination only has dared to sweep down the cobwebs of tradition, and view the grand picture of life by the daylight of common sense. Only from a Unitarian pulpit may a minister dare to state his full conviction.

I turn now to consider the second question which I proposed to you in opening: Does Unitarianism stand for any principle which we, as Unitarians, are bound to support and defend?

Is not this question already answered by what has gone before? If we, as Unitarians, believe the prevalent faiths to be false and harmful, exercising a bad influence on society, and encouraging men to lead immoral lives, trusting to death-bed repentance and a vicarious atonement for justification, how can we remain indifferent? If we believe that we are possessed of a purer faith, tending to a better life here and a happier life hereafter, how shall we keep silence? And yet it is a melancholy fact that Unitarians, as a class, are less loyal to their convictions than any other religious denomination. They give, as a rule, but half-hearted support to their own church, and not infrequently go over to the enemy. They support creeds that they do not believe in with both money and attendance, while their own faith languishes for want of just that support. They send their children to Roman Catholic convents or

Episcopalian boarding-schools, to be educated, quite as willingly as to Unitarian institutions, if indeed not more willingly. Here in New England, the stronghold of Unitarianism, a well-filled Unitarian church is the exception, a live Unitarian Sunday-school something almost unheard of.

My friends, I would have you feel that Unitarianism is not a dead issue, but a living one. There is a principle involved therein; and, believing in that principle, we are bound to support and defend it to the death. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind"; and, being thus persuaded, let him see to it that his life is true to his conviction. Your ancestors rebelled against tyranny, and gave their lives in defence of a principle. Some of you, twenty years ago, took the field, and dared death for a principle. Then, stand by your faith to-day, as you stood by your flag then, and support your society as you supported your regiment. Once you were willing to die for a principle, now I ask you to live for a principle.

PLAN OF SALVATION TAUGHT BY JESUS,

AS COMPARED WITH THAT TAUGHT BY PAUL.

“What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” — LUKE x., 25.

“What must I do to be saved?” — ACTS xvi., 30.

SUCH was the question asked of Jesus by a Jewish lawyer; and such was the question asked of Paul, some thirty years later, by the Greek jailor at Philippi.

It was no new question then, for it had been asked for ages. It is no old question now, for it is upon every lip. “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” “What must I do to be saved?” is the anxious inquiry of every heart at some period of life. Even the most worldly cannot banish it; for the sand in the hour-glass grows less and less day by day, and no human power can add another grain thereto. Each silver hair, each wrinkle on the brow, the failing vision and the tottering step,—all are advance couriers of death, to warn us of his approach. Stricken by his shafts, one by one our comrades fall; and well we know that “there is no discharge in that war.” Young and old, rich and poor, high and low, all must fall, and that soon; for death is no respecter of persons. Fifty years ago, all these vacant seats were filled by those who have passed

away. Fifty years hence, how few of us shall remain! Picture the scene, if you can. There will be another minister in the pulpit, and other hearers in the pews. Perhaps one or two, or at most half a dozen, of these young children will be here as gray-haired men and women, perhaps not even these; and of all the rest no trace will remain, save here and there upon the earth's surface a sodded mound overgrown with weeds and a graven name fast fading from the stone.

At first thought, the picture is a sad one; and hopelessly sad would it be, had it not an outlook,—were there not a rift in the cloud. But, through that rift, we catch fleeting glimpses of a glory all unknown to earth, and rise on the wings of hope to greet the rising day. The soul affirms her immortality, and with confidence exclaims:—

“ Though I stoop
Into a dark, tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time :
I press God's lamp close to my heart ;
Its splendor, soon or late, shall pierce the gloom ;
I shall emerge *somewhere*.”

This conviction that we shall emerge somewhere, this uncertainty of where or what our destiny may be, gives life its zest. Were all revealed, might not eternity pall upon the sense? Now, the prospect is ever fresh, since it is ever changing. Will not eternity be an endless series of dissolving views? As one fades from the canvas, a lovelier shall replace it, to be in turn replaced by one still more beautiful.

So we question and so we imagine ; but now another doubt arises : Admitting the reality of the eternal life, am I worthy to attain thereto ? Harriet Martineau said she could see no good reason why Harriet Martineau should be continued. An intelligent business man told me not long since that he had never met with either man or woman whom he considered worth saving. The judgment is a harsh one, yet I think all would indorse it at times. Our human aims are so low, our human interests so small, our human lives so petty and mean, that the question forces itself upon us, Are we worth saving ? Yet why do we feel this sense of littleness ? Is it not because we feel also within us the elements of greatness ? The chained eagle pines ; and why ? Because his pinions thrill with action, and his native instinct points him to the stars.

Of this we are persuaded, that a larger destiny is ours than we find here. To youth, the joys of earth are sufficient ; but soon they pall. The soul yearns for something purer, nobler, larger, better than these baubles of sense, and questions eagerly of the life beyond : This life does not satisfy me. "What shall I do to inherit eternal life ?" "What must I do to be saved ?" I now ask you to consider with me the respective answers given to these questions by the two great leaders of religious thought in the Christian world, to whom they were addressed ; namely, Jesus and Paul : "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life ?" asked the lawyer of Jesus. And he answered, "What is written in the law of Moses in

which you were educated? How readest thou the answer there given?" The lawyer replied: "I find these two injunctions in the law of Moses: first, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind'; second, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.'" And Jesus said to him: "Thou hast answered right. This is the law taught by Moses, and this is what I also teach. If you love God truly, and your neighbor as yourself, you shall live eternally."

You will notice that throughout the dialogue, as reported in the several Gospels, Jesus says no word about having faith in himself. He was but a humble teacher of God's truth, and doubtless felt himself an unworthy vessel to convey that kindling draught to parched lips. To us, receivers of that draught, he seems transfigured, and hardly of earth; but I doubt not that to himself he seemed far otherwise, and the more so since his ideal of righteousness was so transcendently excellent.

Here, then, in his own words, we have the plan of salvation taught by Jesus. How simple it is! No mysteries of faith, no subtleties of dogma, no forms or ceremonies, no questions about creeds. Simply a religion of love,—love to God and love to man. "This do, and thou shalt live." This was the religion he taught, and this the religion by which he lived. It is much easier to preach than to practise; but he practised what he preached. The whole record of his life can be summed up in five words, "He

went about doing good." Judged from a worldly point of view, his was not a remarkable life: he established no empire, he wrote no books, he discovered no secrets of nature, he gave the world no facts, he did not even say anything original; but, judged from a spiritual stand-point, his was the most remarkable of all lives, in that he lived and taught the noblest yet the simplest form of religion possible,—a religion of love. A child may understand it, and a sage cannot improve upon it.

But, strange to say, the human mind is never satisfied with that which is perfectly clear and simple. It has a morbid craving for that which is strange and mysterious. A touch of the marvellous gives wondrous interest to a story. The author who is easily understood is pronounced superficial, while he whose style is obscure is counted learned. The Gordian knot may be tied in hemp; but to him who unties it, it will seem worsted, and to him who cannot untie it, it will appear the finest silk.

Like Jesus, the apostle Paul was a Jew; but, unlike him, he had been reared in the strictest sect of the Pharisees, and had imbibed all their fantastic notions regarding ceremonial observance and justification by faith. The bent of his mind was argumentative rather than religious; and this I count the distinctive difference between the two men. Jesus was all simplicity and devotion, Paul was all subtlety and argument; Jesus was moral, Paul was metaphysical; Jesus was religious, Paul was theological.

In Paul's time, the Gospels had not yet come into

existence, and all his information concerning Jesus must have been gleaned from floating tradition. The survivors of the twelve at Jerusalem may have enlightened him somewhat; but this is uncertain, as he does not appear to have met with them until after he had been preaching several years, and then they treated him as a heretic, constantly quarrelled with him, and sought to undo his work. Had they been so disposed, they probably could not have given him much information worth having, as they seem to have quite misunderstood the spirit of Jesus' teaching. He had told them emphatically, "My kingdom is *not* of this world"; but they insisted that it was of this world. They believed him to have been the "Messiah" promised by the prophets, and that he would presently return from heaven — which they regarded as a place only a few miles away, up in the sky — to destroy the Romans and restore the kingdom of Israel. Paul believed the same; and the only point of difference between him and the twelve was as to who should become citizens of the new Jewish kingdom soon to be established. James, Peter, and the rest said it was for Jews only, while Paul maintained that Gentiles also might share therein, if they would only believe Jesus to have been the promised Messiah. So you see that Christianity at first was only a sect of Judaism. The twelve apostles were Jews, and Paul was a Jew, and both they and he remained Jews to the last. They differed from the majority of their countrymen only in this,— the latter believed Mes-

siah was yet to come. The apostles, Paul included, believed that he had already come, had looked the ground over, and gone back to heaven to report progress; whence he would presently return with an army of angels, to sweep all before him. In Paul's preaching, the only way to escape destruction and secure citizenship in the coming kingdom was to acknowledge the sovereignty of Christ and take the oath of allegiance to him. Therefore, when the jailor at Philippi questioned, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul, in answer, made only one condition: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

Here, then, are the two systems brought into sharp contrast. Jesus' plan of salvation was love to God and man, universal benevolence, a life of good works. Paul's plan of salvation was faith,—belief that Jesus was the promised Messiah, or Christ, who should restore Israel.

These two systems have been blended in Christianity. The religious element therein is from Jesus, its theology is from Paul. You find the spirit of Jesus in the charities and sympathies of Christian men and women. You find the spirit of Paul in the creeds, the forms, and the stilted observances of the several sects. All this is but Phariseeism,—a legitimate inheritance from Paul, who was bred a strict Pharisee, and never thoroughly outgrew his early training; but Jesus detested Phariseeism in every form, and made this sect the especial object of his denunciation.

As I read the record, I am more and more impressed with the simple, unpretending character of the life that Jesus lived,—a poor, unlettered mechanic, without influence, but rich in spirit, learned through communion with nature, and winning all hearts to himself by the love he felt and showed for all. I find him purely human, a man among men. And while I thank Paul that, mainly through his exertions, the record of Jesus' life is preserved to us, I blame him that he overwhelmed the pure religion of his Master under such a weary load of theological rubbish as to almost strangle it.

My brothers, I strive to clear away this theological deposit, because I consider it worthless and harmful. I seek the religion that Jesus taught,—not because Jesus taught it, for I regard him as a fallible man like myself, but because I think he taught God's truth. Happiness is what we all seek, and the question is, How shall we attain thereto? This was the question asked by the lawyer of Jesus, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" that is, "What shall I do to inherit eternal happiness?" This was the question asked by the jailor of Paul, "What must I do to be saved?" that is, "What must I do to be saved from misery here and hereafter?"

We are all more or less unhappy and miserable, and we are all asking the same question. Jesus answers that question in words, not only on this occasion, but repeatedly. He answers that question also by the life he lived. He tells us that to love

God and man is the whole law, and emphasizes his meaning by the story of the good Samaritan ; while he himself practically fulfils that story day by day. Herein, he teaches that acts of charity and self-forgetfulness lead to happiness. Again he tells us, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Here he recognizes the tremendous power for good or evil resting in that unruly member, the tongue. Who has not suffered by the word of another? Who has not made others suffer by his word? Surely, the prayer of the psalmist should be our prayer continually, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth ; keep the door of my lips." But Jesus does not stop here : he takes one more step, goes to the fountain-head, and says : "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. The good man out of his good treasure bringeth forth good things : and the evil man out of his evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." Here, he demands the purification of thought and the renovation of the soul. It is as if he said to one whose ground is overrun with weeds : First, cut down the weeds : these are the bad actions of life ; second, destroy the feathery seeds floating hither and thither : these are the thoughtless expressions of the lips ; third, dig up and destroy the roots : these are evil thoughts ; fourth, replenish and reseed the ground—which is thy soul—with the germs of righteousness, from whence shall spring the green blade of hope, the blossom of promise, and the golden harvest of eternal joy.

MIRACLES AND MYTHS OF THE BIBLE.

NEXT Sunday, I propose to consider the question, Did Jesus work miracles? And, as an introduction to that inquiry, I ask you now to review with me the miracles and marvels recorded in the Old Testament. Such a preliminary review is very important, as the Old Testament is the foundation upon which the New Testament is built; and, if we do not understand the Old, we cannot possibly understand the New. First of all, I would have you gain an idea of the average mental condition of the Jewish people in the time of Jesus.

That they were ignorant and superstitious beyond all belief will best be proven by a glance at their public-school system. The schools were held in the synagogues, where the school-children sat, barefooted and half-clothed, upon the earthen floor, the teacher being seated on a cushion at one end of the room. He taught them that the world was a flat circular plain of very limited size, having a large dark cavity upon the under side, in which the spirits of the dead were confined. This flat plain, with its cellar-like attachment, floated upon a sea of unknown magnitude, and was roofed in with a metal sky, which rested at the edges upon the mountain-tops.

Under this metal roof, the sun, moon, and stars were hung as lanterns to light the plain below. On the top of this metal sky was heaven, where their God Yahweh and his angels dwelt, keeping watch over the human race, and sometimes going down to earth the better to direct matters. If the teacher desired to convey the idea simply and yet forcibly to the pupil's mind, he might spread a large table with a blue cloth to represent "the great deep"; then in the centre of the cloth he would place an iron bowl to stand for "the underworld," where the spirits of the dead were; and upon top of this he would place a green delf plate to typify "the round earth." This last he would cover over with a copper basin of the same circumference, inverted so as to rest its rim upon the raised edges of the plate: this would be the metal sky resting on the mountain-tops. Then, on the upturned bottom of this basin, he would set a smaller one of shining gold, which would stand for heaven. Had it been lawful to make images,—which was forbidden by the law of Moses,—he would probably have represented the god Yahweh as a very old and venerable man of marked Jewish type, having a long, gray beard and rather harsh expression of countenance. The angels he would represent as younger men (also Jews in appearance) clad with wings for speedy travel, and wearing swords wherewith to execute Yahweh's judgments upon mortals. Along with these, he would exhibit three old men,—Jews in earthly mould of flesh and blood. These would be Enoch, Moses, and Elijah, who were be-

lieved never to have died, but had been caught up bodily into heaven. So you see their plan of the universe was simple, easily explained, and easily understood, though not very satisfactory to us who know better.

The only books the school-children studied were the manuscript copies of what now constitute our Old Testament. Here they read of how Yahweh created Adam and Eve out of the dust of the ground; how he walked in the garden in the cool of the evening, and passed judgment upon them for their disobedience, and upon the serpent for tempting them; how he cursed Cain and banished him; how he took Enoch bodily up into heaven; how he decided to destroy the world by a flood, and did so, but saved Noah and his family alive, together with pairs of every kind of creature, then hung the rainbow on the cloud as a perpetual token of his covenant not to repeat the judgment; how he confounded the builders of Babel and dispersed them; how he chose Abram for a friend, and blessed him, and visited him at his tent, and ate with him, and gave him a son in his old age; how two angels were entertained by Lot, and saved him and his children alive, but destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire from heaven, and turned his wife into a pillar of salt for her disobedience in looking back at the conflagration; how Yahweh chose Jacob and rejected Esau while the twins were yet unborn, blessing the first with every prosperity and causing him to take precedence of his elder brother; how Yahweh, in the form of a

man, wrestled with Jacob, was overcome by him and compelled to bless him ; how Yahweh favored Joseph and brought the Israelites into Egypt, where they multiplied and grew strong ; and how, when the time came for them to go forth, Yahweh's chosen leader Moses appeared.

Up to this point, the wonders have nearly all been performed by Yahweh and his angels ; but now the power of working miracles is conferred upon men, while the visible appearance of Yahweh in human form ceases. He still appears, however, in dreams and visions, in fire and whirlwind. Thus Moses, while pasturing his sheep upon Mount Horeb, meets him in the burning bush, and is commanded to go and deliver Israel from bondage. As a token of his authority, Yahweh gives him power to work miracles. But it would appear that others had similar powers ; for, when Moses and his brother Aaron went before Pharaoh, and transformed their rod into a serpent, the Egyptian sorcerers did exactly the same thing, only Moses' serpent swallowed all the others, and then became a rod again. Then Moses turned the river Nile and all the other streams of the country into blood ; but the magicians of Egypt did the same. Then he covered the land with a plague of frogs, but they did this also. But when he transformed the dust of the ground into lice, this they could not do. He also brought a plague of flies upon the land, and a disease which killed off all the live stock ; also a plague of boils upon all the people ; also a hail-storm, which destroyed all that were exposed to it ;

then locusts in clouds, which ate up every green thing; then darkness over all the land so intense that, as the record tells us, it might be felt; and finally Yahweh took the matter into his own hand, and in one night slew all the first-born of man and beast throughout the land of Egypt, from the eldest son of Pharaoh down even to the eldest of the meanest of his subjects. Then the king commanded that Israel should go; yet so unwilling was he to lose his slaves that he pursued them, and overtook them at the Red Sea. But Moses, by command of Yahweh, stretched forth his magic rod, and divided the waters, so that the Israelites went through dryshod; but Pharaoh, attempting to follow, was overwhelmed with all his host by the returning tide. Henceforth, the people were led in their wanderings by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. When they were hungry, Yahweh sent them quails and manna; and when they lacked water, Moses procured it for them by striking the rock with his magic rod.

How vividly the presence of Yahweh is pictured upon Mount Sinai, where he appears in thunders and lightnings, with fire, and smoke, and thick cloud, to give the law graven upon tables of stone to Moses, whom he will not allow to see his face, but shows him his back!

The next important miracle occurs after Moses' death, when the people, under command of Joshua, attempt to cross the river Jordan. The ark being borne by priests at the head of the army, so soon as

their feet touch the water the stream is divided, and the whole army passes over dry-shod. Then Joshua besieges the city of Jericho in a somewhat novel fashion. For six days, the Israelites made the circuit of the city once each day, preceded by the ark, around which seven priests walked, each bearing a ram's horn trumpet, on which he blew continually. On the seventh day, they compassed the city in the same order seven times; and, as they completed the seventh circuit, the whole army united in a loud shout, at which the walls fell down; and all they had to do was to walk in and take possession, which they did, putting every living creature—man, woman, child, and beast—to death. But more remarkable by far is the story of Joshua's fight with the Amorites in the valley of Ajalon. Fearing that darkness might interrupt the slaughter, he commanded the sun and moon both to stand still over certain points which he assigned to them; and thus they stood for a whole day, until he had made an end of his enemies, when he permitted the heavenly bodies to move on.

This was the crowning feat of Joshua's life in the way of miracle-working. After his death, we find angels appearing to Gideon, Manoah, and others; and then we come to the history of Samson, whose birth was foretold by an angel from heaven. Samson was rather an athlete than a worker of miracles. The secret of his great strength lay in his hair, which was very long. A lion attacked him one day, but he easily killed the creature with his hands, having no

weapon. He quarrelled with the Philistines, and on one occasion killed thirty men single-handed; but this was as nothing compared with the time when he slew one thousand men with the jaw-bone of an ass, that being the only weapon at hand. Then, feeling thirsty, he prayed to Yahweh, and a spring of fresh water flowed out of the jaw-bone to quench his thirst. At another time, he caught three hundred foxes, and tied their tails together with fire-brands between. Then he loosed them into his enemies' corn-fields, and destroyed all their crops. And yet again he carried away the gates of one of their cities upon his shoulders. At last, through the treachery of his wife, who cut off his hair and thus deprived him of strength, he was taken captive by the Philistines, who put out his eyes and made him grind corn for them. But one day, at a festival, they brought him out to make sport of him, not noticing that his hair was partially grown again, when he seized upon the pillars supporting the hall in which they were assembled, and pulled down the building upon their heads, destroying the whole multitude, and himself with the rest.

In the time of Samuel there were many marvels. The Philistines, having captured the ark in battle, placed it as a trophy in the temple of their god Dagon. But the idol of Dagon fell prostrate before it, and was broken in pieces. Then the whole city was afflicted with disease, while the country was overrun with mice, so it was decided to send the ark home. They therefore placed it on a new cart,

and yoked thereto two cows which had lately calved. The calves they shut up at home, yet the cows deliberately left them, went lowing along the highway, and carried the ark directly to the land of Israel. But, when it arrived at its destination, the people were so rejoiced that some of them looked inside to see if all had been returned safely. Yahweh was angry at this sacrilege, and killed fifty thousand of them; so the return of the ark was hardly an unalloyed blessing, after all. Then David, a mere youth, armed only with a sling and stone, killed Goliath, the gigantic champion of the Philistines, who was over ten feet in height, whose coat of mail weighed more than three thousand pounds, and the head of his spear three hundred and seventy-five pounds. Saul, in fear of the Philistines, goes to the witch of Endor, who raises up the spirit of the dead Samuel to talk with him. Uzzah, attempting to steady the ark with his hand, as it is brought home on a cart, is struck dead by Yahweh for the sacrilege. David, dancing naked before the ark, as it passes down the street, is despised by Saul's daughter Michal. As a punishment to her for this, she dies childless. David's sin in killing Uriah the Hittite, and taking his wife, is punished by the death of their child, as foretold by the prophet Nathan. Then David relieves a famine of three years' duration by hanging seven of Saul's sons. Finally, David is tempted by Yahweh to take a census of the people, and then Yahweh punishes him for so doing by a pestilence, which kills seventy thousand of them.

The chief marvel recorded in the reign of Solomon was the descent of fire from heaven upon the sacrifice offered up at the dedication of the temple. After his death, the kingdom was divided, Jereboam reigning over Israel, and Rehoboam over Judah. A prophet of Yahweh visited the court of Israel, and prophesied against the idolatry there practised. Jereboam attempted to seize him, when his arm withered so that he could not draw it back, while the altar on which he had been sacrificing was broken in two. His arm was afterward restored to its normal condition by the prophet. The latter, disobeying the command of Yahweh to go home by another road, was killed by a lion.

With the prophet Elijah, the age of miracle was fully restored. He prophesied a great drought in the land of Israel, then went and lived in a remote part of the country, where ravens came regularly twice a day, bringing him rations of bread and meat. Then he went and lived in the house of a widow who had but a handful of meal and a little bottle of oil left to feed herself and her son; but, sharing these with the prophet, they were miraculously replenished, so that they lasted the three persons during the whole period of the famine. Then the widow's son fell sick and died, but Elijah restored him to life. So soon as rain came and the famine ceased, Elijah summoned the prophets of Baal to a trial of skill. They first, by his direction, built an altar, whereon they laid wood for a fire, and on top of this the carcass of a bullock. They then prayed to their

god to send down fire to burn the sacrifice, but no fire came. Elijah then built an altar, and, having piled wood and placed his bullock thereon, caused twelve barrels of water to be poured over the whole. Then he prayed to Yahweh, who sent down fire from heaven, which not only devoured the sacrifice and the wood, but also the stone altar, the very dust of the ground, and licked up the twelve barrels of water, which had run down into a trench prepared to receive it. He then commanded the people to slay all the prophets of Baal (some four hundred and fifty men), which they did. But Jezebel, the queen, was angry at this, and threatened his life; whereupon, he fled into the wilderness and lay down to die. He fell asleep; and finally an angel woke him, made a fire, and baked bread for him. He slept again, and the same thing was repeated. Then, in the strength of those two meals, he walked forty days and forty nights without food to Horeb, the mount of God; and here Yahweh appeared to him. First there was a hurricane, which rent the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces, then an earthquake, then fire; and at last "a still, small voice," which gave to him the commandment of his God. He was instructed to anoint a man named Elisha as his successor in the office of prophet, which he did. Not long after this, Elijah caused fire to come down from heaven and slay two companies of fifty men each, with their captains, who were sent to bring him before the king. This is the last miracle of his recorded until the day of his translation.

Upon the day in question, he went in company with Elisha to the river Jordan, and smote the water with his mantle. The torrent thereupon instantly divided, and the two passed over dry-shod. Then a chariot and horses of flaming fire came down from the sky, and, mounting this, he was carried up to heaven in a whirlwind. His mantle fell from his shoulders as he ascended, and rested on the ground. This Elisha took, and on his return parted the waters of the Jordan again, as his master had done.

Henceforth, the spirit of Elijah rested on Elisha. When the latter reached Jericho, he found that the water there was bad, and the ground barren. He cured both by sprinkling a little salt, and also promised the people that there should be no more death. He went from here to Bethel, where a number of school-children came out of the city and mocked him. In return, he cursed them, whereupon two bears came out of the woods and killed forty-two of them. On another occasion, by a miracle, he filled a valley with water, when there was no rain or apparent source of supply. He took pity on a poor widow who was in debt, and caused a small pot of oil which she had in the house to overflow and fill every utensil which she possessed, and all that she could borrow from the neighbors. He then directed her to sell the oil, pay her debts, and live in comfort on the rest. The child of another woman who lodged him in her house fell ill and died, whereupon Elisha restored it to life. He cured the poison in a potful of herbs, by casting in a little meal, and

fed a company of one hundred men with twenty barley-cakes and a bag of bruised wheat, so that all had enough, and some was left over. He cured Naaman, the Syrian, of leprosy, without even seeing him, by having him wash seven times in the river Jordan, and punished his own servant Gehazi with the very same disease, for disobedience. He caused an axe-head, which fell accidentally into the river, to float upon the surface of the water. He smote the whole army of the king of Syria with blindness, and then led them as one man captive to the king of Israel. At the same time, he showed his servant a heavenly host of horses and chariots of fire, which surrounded him on every side, waiting to do his bidding. This was the last miracle of Elisha's life; but even his corpse had virtue. Some time after his death, a funeral was in progress, and, being interrupted by enemies, the mourners threw the dead body hastily into the prophet's tomb, which stood open. In falling, it touched Elisha's dry bones, and was straightway restored to life.

Elisha was the last great miracle-worker in Israel; yet wonders did not wholly cease with him. Thus, when the Assyrians under Sennacherib invaded the land, the prophet Isaiah foretold their destruction, and, in fulfilment of the prophecy, an angel descended and in one night slew one hundred and eighty-five thousand men. Then Hezekiah, king of Judah, fell sick, and was about to die, but in consequence of prayer had his life prolonged. As a sign of this, Isaiah caused the sun to go backward ten degrees.

This is the last miracle of importance recorded for a period of nearly six hundred years. Then, in the Book of Daniel (written, probably, about the year 150 B.C.), we are told how three pious Jews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were cast into a great fiery furnace by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, because they refused to worship a golden image which he had erected as the god of Babylon. But, though special pains were taken to heat the furnace to such a fearful temperature that the fire killed the men who cast them in, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego walked unharmed inside; and, when they were taken out after a considerable lapse of time, not even a hair of their heads had been singed, nor could the smell of fire be detected on their clothing. Belshazzar (Nebuchadnezzar's son) made a great feast one night, and sat drinking with his courtiers out of the golden vessels taken from the temple of Yahweh at Jerusalem. Suddenly there appeared upon the wall a shadowy hand, which wrote several words in a strange tongue. None of the king's soothsayers could translate them; but, the Hebrew prophet Daniel being sent for, he at once made known their import. That night, Belshazzar was slain by the Medes, who captured the city, as Daniel had foretold. Darius, their king, made Daniel chief ruler of the kingdom, but later was persuaded by some of the other princes to cast him to the lions. But Yahweh sealed up their mouths, so that they could not hurt him; and he escaped uninjured, after passing a whole night in their midst. The angel Gabriel also waited

upon him constantly in the form of a man, and interpreted his dreams for him. After Daniel, there were many other prophets who foretold events, but none of them seem to have been miracle-workers. Jonah, however, passed through many adventures on his journey to Nineveh, being swallowed by a great fish, which carried him in its stomach for three days and three nights, and then vomited him out upon the dry land. After preaching to the people and converting them, he was so angry to think that their repentance was going to save them from destruction that he wished to die; but Yahweh reproved him by means of a palm-tree, which grew up beside him in a single night, so that he rested in its shadow, but perished the next day, and left him as before, exposed to the burning sun.

Such are the stories recorded in our Old Testament; and, in Jesus' times, these stories were believed by the Jewish people to be the record of actual historical facts. So, the school-children were required to commit them to memory as the principal part of their education; and, without any doubt, Jesus did so during his school-days. With ideas like these constantly impressed upon their minds, is it any wonder that the people were unpractical, visionary, with an insatiable appetite for the marvellous, and ready to believe anything, the more wonderful the better? We find in these accounts only legends, myths, and allegories such as we find also in the *Arabian Nights*, Grecian mythology, and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Thus, the story of the Garden of Eden is a legend by which the writer sought, in an imaginary and poetic way, to account for the origin of the universe, the existence of man, and the prevalence of evil. The history of Samson and his mighty deeds is a myth or imaginary narrative conveying a hidden meaning. The name Samson signifies "sun-god," and the hero of the story is the sun personified as a man. His long hair—wherein lies his strength—is the sun's rays. Samson kills a lion that attacks him; that is, the sun passes through the sign of the Zodiac known as "the Lion." Samson's famous riddle, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness," which he answered by showing how a swarm of bees had made their home in the skeleton of the lion, means that, when the sun passes through the constellation of the Lion, it is the season for bees to make honey. The foxes, with fire-brands tied to their tails, are the lurid thunder-clouds shooting forth destructive lightnings. The jaw-bone with which he slays a thousand men is also a bank of ragged cloud, charged with death-dealing lightning flashes; but, after their fury is past, cool rains fall from the cloud to quench man's thirst, even as the water gushed from the jaw-bone of the ass, in answer to Samson's prayer. And, as Samson was robbed of his strength by the cutting of his hair so that his enemies bound him and tortured him, yet he finally recovered his might and triumphed over them, so the sun in

winter gradually loses power and is shorn of his beams, but with the return of spring arises in majesty and destroys the ice and snow. This whole myth dates from a time when the people were sun-worshippers.

The story of Jonah is an allegory wherein the writer expresses his belief that Yahweh will have mercy not only on the Jewish people, but on the heathen also; therefore, the Jewish prophet Jonah is sent to preach repentance to the Gentile city of Nineveh. The narrowness of those who claimed that only the Jews were regarded by Yahweh is rebuked in the fable of the palm-tree. Yahweh is merciful. If Jonah mourns for a plant which comes up in a night and withers in a night, shall not Yahweh take pity on the great city of Nineveh,—heathen though it be,—in which were one hundred and twenty thousand little children who could not tell their right hand from their left?

The account of Jonah's voyage—when he tries to escape from Yahweh, but is overtaken by a storm, is swallowed by the fish, and finally through prayer is delivered—signifies simply that we cannot possibly escape from God. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."

So you see that, when all these stories were written, each had a meaning which was gradually lost. Some were mere fanciful creations of the poets, penned to amuse the people on a holiday or to glorify some hero. Others were intended to teach astronomical or other facts of nature in an easy,

pleasant way ; as we now teach our little ones in the primary schools, telling them fairy tales of the black giant steam, and what he does for us. Others again were intended to impress some great moral lesson or religious truth. Is it not a pity that the original meanings were lost, and that the people came to look upon all these accounts as veritable history of actual occurrences? Is it not a yet greater pity that some intelligent people among us still look upon them in the same light?

